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511 TLS May 11 1984 FRENCH LITERATURE

Thinking to change the world

Annette Lavers

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE
Oeuvres romanesques
Edited by Michel Contat, Michel Rybalka, with Genevieve Idt and George H. Bauer
2174pp. Paris: Gallimard. 280.10 fr.
2070110028

Les Carnets de la Drôle de Guerre: Novembre 1939-Mars 1940
432pp. Paris: Gallimard. 90 fr.
2070257789

Lettres au Castor et à quelques autres
Edited by Simone de Beauvoir
Tome I, 1926-1939. 520p. 120 fr.
207026078X

Tome 2, 1940-1963. 367pp. 95 fr.
Paris: Gallimard.
2070700399

Cahiers pour une morale
601pp. Paris: Gallimard. 150 fr.
2070246485

MICHAEL SCRIVEN
Sartre's Existential Biographies
152pp. Macmillan. £20.
0333319877

DRNNIS HOLLIER
Politique de la prose: Jean-Paul Sartre et l'an quarante
310pp. Paris: Gallimard. 89 fr.
2070218368

Four years after his death, Sartre still seems intent on his project of liberating us from fatalism by persuading us of the existence of freedom. Undeclared either by the radical event of death or by the dogma of a literary purgatory affecting all writers immediately after it, he is currently enjoying a thriving after-life, not only because the stream of publications by or about him is unabated but because these often bring to light aspects which alter considerably our image of him as a man and writer.

Sartre's true entrance into immortality came with the addition of his *Oeuvres romanesques* to Gallimard's Pléiade series. The editors of this volume are beyond praise, so valuable are their comments and the 600 pages or so of documents they give us, including expurgated passages from *La Nausée*, a short story, "Dépaysement", and two appendices on unpublished parts of *Les Chemins de la liberté*. Since then there has appeared a rich harvest of unpublished material by Sartre, itself to be followed by a second volume of *Critique de la*

raison dialectique, by the *Oeuvres de jeunesse*, by the screenplay for John Huston's Freud film, and by more correspondence.

All this is a feast of intelligence and fun as a result of which Sartre may be recognized at last for the writer he is, after forty years during which readers concentrated chiefly on his metaphysics to make sure that they had got it right. Above all, these texts taken together are an awesome testimony to Sartre's stupendous vitality and fecundity, especially during the war period. Freed from the necessity to teach at all hours and from the financial acrobatics necessary to support, jointly with Simone de Beauvoir, a growing extended family of girlfriends and former pupils (this often makes hilarious reading in the *Lettres*, as he advises Beauvoir on how to delay paying income tax for as long as possible), he wrote in nine months the *Carnets*, *L'Age de raison*, the *Nativity play Bariona*, the outlines of *L'Etre et le néant* and a *Morale*, as well as innumerable letters.

We know that the manuscripts of this carelessly generous writer were accident-prone. The Pléiade volume includes a section of *La Nausée* which a pupil had taken because it was written on the back of a school attendance-sheet. The *Carnets*, alas, contains only those of Sartre's notebooks which were found after a friend left them in the train (one was picked up off the track), or at least those which private collectors are not (most un-Sartreanly) keeping for their secret perusal. They were written between September 1939 and June 1940, and the letters Sartre wrote during the same period (to Beauvoir=Beaver=she whom Sartre addresses, with unvarying love and affection, as "mon charmant Castor") to some extent offset the loss of the other notebooks. The *Carnets* purport to describe the unprecedented experience of a phoney war as well as to assist in a general reassessment of Sartre's personality and achievements to date.

Ethically they foreshadow many of the later works, in particular the *Cahiers pour une morale* which Sartre wrote in 1947-8, to supply what he called "une morale tough" suitable for post-war times. They show that the natural unit of his thought was the seven-page paragraph (one lasts for twenty-six pages), but I cannot imagine a better introduction to his thought than these notebooks in which autobiography, literary analysis, and an account of the daily reality of war by "un homme qui les vaut tous et que vaut n'importe qui" merge into a general

speculation on the possibility of a "totalizing" knowledge of a single human being or period.

The *indits* of the *Oeuvres romanesques*, chiefly those concerning the end of *Les Chemins de la liberté*, seem to call for a complete reinterpretation of Sartre's career. Its course had seemed self-evident: first, the uncertainties about commitment and the lack of maturity found perfect expression in the analytical fiction; then came the revelation of solidarity, and of a theatrical immediacy and efficacy, in the army and as a prisoner-of-war; next, a working-through of these lessons in the new medium of drama, whereby a divided subject wishing to be both authentic and committed is first embodied in two characters and then triumphantly unified in *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu*. Correspondingly, the fiction was allowed to wither away, the cause most frequently given being Sartre's difficulty in transposing into the black-and-white terms of the Resistance period the picture in varying shades of grey which followed the Cold War. In fact, there are many factual and artistic pointers to show that the gradual abandonment of *Les Chemins* was due to a superabundance of material and to an ever-increasing awareness of complex personal and historical issues. Sartre was still working on the fourth volume in 1952 (hoping for publication in the autumn of that year) and, having meanwhile contemplated a fifth and then a sixth volume, was still talking about his novel in 1959 as a realistic proposition. This makes the use of fiction, imaginatively at least, contemporary with practically the whole of his dramatic output.

Even after taking into account his resort to other genres - the theatre, conceived on the lines of Hegelian tragedy as a "conflit de droits", and the existential biography, which Michael Scriven rightly describes as "a critical alternative to the traditional bourgeois novel" - a mystery still remains. For readers of *Les Chemins de la liberté* have had to wait more than thirty years properly to gauge the hero, Mathieu's, eventual fate. Of all the unpublished material in the Pléiade volume, the most fascinating is unquestionably the long fragment from the promised fourth volume of the sequence, *La Dernière Chance*, which shows his reunion with the Communist Brunet, just after the latter has been released following a failed escape attempt from the prisoner-of-war camp, and the reversal in the two men's respective positions. Reminiscent of another memorable confrontation between Hugo and Hoeder-

er in *Les Mains sales*, which constantly fluctuates between the personal and the political, this powerful scene must have been satisfying both to Sartre's pride, since it shows Mathieu in control from beginning to end, and to his affection for Paul Nizan (the model for Brunet and the dead friend whom he had just helped to rehabilitate against Communist slander). More important, given Sartre's difficulties at about this time in elaborating, in the *Cahiers pour une morale*, a system of ethics allowing both for absolutes and for historicity, it is a wholly convincing scene.

We see Mathieu, secure in his efficacy as head (with the authority although not the mystique attached to the position) of a network organizing escapes from the camp, and well able to withstand all the knee-jerk insults and ritual anathemas hurled by an *apparatchik* against "petit-bourgeois individualism and idealism". Men should be content to provide, as his group does, "occasions" for authentic behaviour without paternalistic rhetoric or intimidation, and incidentally without the propensity of the Party intellectual, used to standing *in loco parentis* to the unenlightened masses, to arrogate privileges like jumping the queue when it comes to leaving the camp. If the prisoners really wish to escape, Mathieu's group makes this possible without presuming to pass judgment on their individual motives.

Having revealed to Brunet that a common informer and not his own comrades had betrayed their escape plans to their captors, Mathieu then, in a startling reversal, urges his friend not to leave the Party to which he has devoted his life. So the ideal of freedom in commitment is still split between the two heroes; but each is divided and comes to see this division, to which one never gets used, as defining the human condition: "Totaleme dans le coup et totalement hors du coup... c'est ça un homme"; a conclusion which acts as a lodestar for the whole of Sartre's work after the war. As Michel Rybalka perceptively stresses, the experience of communal life during the phoney war and in captivity was undoubtedly crucial in Sartre's life. He needed nothing less than the myth of the Resistance to bring out in his hero, Mathieu, the experience he himself alludes to in his plans for the fourth volume as "Le Camp comme Apocalypse. Poésie de la promiscuité" - an intimacy which in his eyes destroyed the idealist dimension of individualism.

Whatever Sartre's enjoyment earlier of the

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Sticking up for holiness

John Bossy

EDWARD NORMAN
The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century
399pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £22.50.
019 8226896

You have to go a long way to find a substantial book on the history of English Catholicism since the Reformation which was not written by an English Catholic. Barring some sharp but small-scale forays by Lord Dacre and A.L. Rowse, the only real exception I can think of is the German historian Arnold Oskar Meyer, whose extremely sturdy *England and the Catholic Church under Queen Elizabeth* was published in 1911. So Edward Norman's *The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century* is quite an event; it brings the *lares* and *penates* of a domestic history out into the light of public scrutiny.

They look, it is fair to say, remarkably fit. Dr Norman is complimentary, occasionally generous to a fault. Much as I find to admire in Bishop Baines, especially his Pastoral Letter of 1840 which said that the conversion of England to Catholicism was "morally impossible, and therefore not to be made an object of public prayer", I honestly don't think he was "a very great prelate", as Norman says. Not, at least, if Archbishop Ullathorne, ex-cabin boy, missioner to the convicts in Australia, and finally protector of Newman from his colleagues, is only allowed an unqualified "great". There is some question about how distinguished a historian Cardinal Gasquet was. All three of them, as it happens, were Benedictines. You might think that Norman was telegraphing some kind of message to Cardinal Hume.

This raises a question. Is Norman exactly an outsider? Is he about to go over to Rome? If that were so, then the *lares* and *penates* would begin to take on the silhouette of a Trojan Horse trundled within the walls of the Establishment, waiting to disgorge a squad of hoplites on to the courts of Peterhouse. On the evidence of this book, which is all I have to go on, it looks quite likely. Norman's title and subject is *The English Catholic Church*; no nonsense about Roman. He refers systematically to the Church of England as the Protestant, or State, Church, which will not please a lot of Anglicans. He cites with what seems a certain glee a remark of Pugin's that Protestantism is "a sort of disease or fungus". He obviously has a good deal in common with the pre-conversion Newman who looked in his mirror and saw a Monophysite. The impression Norman gives me is that, if Rome and English Catholicism were still what they had been in the nineteenth century, he would have gone over some time ago, but nowadays he might be jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire. Perhaps he is waiting to see whether Rome will join the World Council of Churches. Or perhaps he is perfectly happy where he is, but keen to irritate the Master of his college (Lord Dacre). Whatever his reason, the point

of view he establishes is that of a very benevolent outsider, and it works very nicely.

The main reason for not burdening his book with media-speculations is that it is a most serious, successful and readable work of history, if you allow for a rather strict limitation of the subject. The work has been done, including an impressive amount of work in archives in Bayswater during the war, are now for some reason in France and may or may not bring that large but daunting figure into better focus in the end. In England, Westminster, Downside and Stonyhurst look to have contributed more than the dioceses, which seems significant of the general direction of the book. You will not find much in it about Liverpool or Wigan.

This is not because Norman disdains such places, rather the reverse in fact: he is particularly good on the history of Catholic primary education. But they are slightly eccentric to his theme, which is clear but not run into the ground. It ought not to come as a surprise to people who have read or heard him before, though perhaps it will. It is about the English Catholic Church sticking up for holiness or otherness or simply God, while other denominations were accommodating themselves to a circumambient culture of secularity, liberalism and progress. Hence his focus of interest is not upon those English Catholics who present themselves as peculiarly English—Lingard or Acton or Elgar, say. He gives them a decent run, except for Elgar who sadly is not mentioned, but his heart is clearly among the ultramontanians: John Milner before the restoration of the hierarchy in 1850, Wiseman, Manning and Vaughan after it. Except for a chapter about Catholic Emancipation, it is mainly about Wiseman, Manning and Vaughan, who were successively Archbishops of Westminster from 1850 to 1903.

The politics of Catholic "emancipation" are relevant to Norman's theme, not because voting or sitting in Parliament were of much importance to English Catholics, and certainly not because Norman thinks that they ought to have been, but because of the question whether, in order to get them, they were going to offer "securities" to the state (in the form, among other things, of giving the government some kind of a voice in the appointment of Catholic bishops). Under the influence of Milner and the Irish, and rather against their own inclinations, they did not. Norman does not labour the moral. But since, if this concession to the circumambient culture had been made, neither Wiseman nor Manning would surely have been Archbishops of Westminster (Vaughan would probably have got there anyway), he can be understood to be saying that it was a good thing that it was not. I expect he is right, though I can't help rather regretting that Ullathorne was not given a chance to drop his h's around Archbishop's House, and it is still hard to know what kind of an alternative to Wiseman his *bête noire* George Errington

The Morning After

The fire left to itself might smoulder weeks. Phone cables melt. Paint peels from off back gates. Kitchen windows crack; the whole street reeks of horsehair blazing; still it celebrates.

Though people weep, their tears dry from the heat. Faces flush with flame, beer, sheer relief and such a sense of celebration in our street for me it still means joy though banked with grief.

And that, now clouded, sense of public joy with war-worn adults wild in their loud fling has never come again since as a boy I saw Leeds people dance and heard them sing.

There's still that dark, scorched circle on the road. The morning after, kids like me helped spray hissing upholstery spring-wire that still glowed and cobbles boiling with black gas-tar for VI.

TONY HARRISON

semantic and "retractile".

Finally, the *Lettres* confirm Sartre's ardent desire to change and to abjure his "unspeakable weightlessness". Like Oreste welcoming the burden of a murder, he embraces the shame and guilt caused by a particularly tortuous chapter in his love life in which, the usual simultaneous machinations having misfired, he conceived the idea of sending a brutal letter to one of his partners through a second partner whom this was meant to reassure—while giving as usual a blow-by-blow account to Beauvoir, his "judge". Degraded as he felt by this episode, he also appreciated the sensation of getting out of his depth, both in anger and in the revulsion which prompted him henceforth to renounce such adventures.

One other dimension of these *Lettres* gives them a more than anecdotal interest: the language Sartre and Beauvoir use. So idiosyncratic at times that it is almost private, it adds much to the amusement of the reader (note the odd use of *béats, cupides, plaisant, gonflant, le sou, factums, gaillard, la vie de Tennyson* (—uneventful happiness), or innumerable variations on Merleau-Ponty's name). This inventiveness exhibits a careful appropriation of the full spectrum of the French language which was surely the origin of a veritable change in the *langue* itself, through its subsequent adoption by the media. It is the whole of France, now, which speaks *le langage intello*, with its mixture of social-sciences jargon and a slang whose multi-layered genealogy is deftly traced by Sartre.

Throughout the *Carnets* one can see Heidegger's philosophy being assimilated, as being more suitable than Husserl's for the dramatic uncertainty of the times, and an increasing use of the famous hyphenated phrases, *être-pour-régner, être-pour-la-guerre, être-dans-le-monde*, which seek to render the ethical thrust which Sartre insisted from the beginning underpinned his better known ontological concepts. Ethics are possible only because of the freedom grounded in the transcendent dimension of consciousness; it is this "assumption", this endowing of brute facts with a human meaning which properly constitutes what Sartre calls a "situation". Yet in the absence of God or Nature, the ethical enterprise appears as both "necessary and absurd"; can we find absolutes yet accommodate historicity? The exhilarating opening of the *Cahiers pour une morale*—a mutilated classic deserving equal status with *L'Être et le Néant* and *Critique de la raison dialectique*, for which it provides not so much a transition as a bridge—shows how much Sartre's problematics owe to the experiences described or hinted at in the *Carnets* and the *Lettres*, and even to those of his adolescence and childhood—a dark continent for us, despite *Les Mots*.

Spontaneity is the root of morality; Sartre always tended to believe that everybody was more spontaneously authentic than he was. Thus he can use Pascal's word, *conversion*, to signify not a change of principles but the constant reiteration of an attitude that has to be embodied in ever-changing historical conditions. Modelled on Trotsky's "permanent revolution", his "permanent conversion" does not imply, any more than Trotsky's phrase did, a perpetual abandonment of fundamental opinions, whose permanence indeed it is which causes the problems faced by the writer on ethics or politics. The "philosophical optimism" which Sartre maintained he felt consists in believing that a moral attitude is always possible. The plans he outlines for an "ontological ethics" show how, starting from the realization that "each being forms with all the others a detotalized totality", values can be hierarchized according to their increasing degree of freedom; culminating in the highest value of generosity.

The fact that Sartre abandoned the book, alleging it to be "mythifying" in the current state of the world, does not rob it of all value, especially in view of the numerous concrete descriptions and analyses it gives (for instance, of types of oppression of children, women, slaves, and other ethnic groups), which are among the most brilliant, convincing and moving he ever wrote. Historical materialism, psychoanalysis and anthropology are treated as they were to be later in *Questions de méthode*; as valued interlocutors who never-

theless fail to harmonize their findings, and above all to recognize the primacy of ontology. Close analyses in the *Cahiers* show how the social and the ontological are ineluctably intertwined, and how this fact would be most widely recognized if our established hierarchies did not see their task as being to deny it, to the extent of concealing (as, presumably from the earlier Sartre himself) the kind of built-in helpfulness he can now see in human relationships. This realization can also serve as the basis for a reading of Sartre, as appears from the contrasting studies by Denis Hollier and Michael Scriven.

Scriven treats Sartre's biographies as a new form of fiction, and despite the readjustments which these recent publications will necessitate, his interpretations will not need to be substantially altered. It seems unwarranted, however, to assert as Scriven does that just because Sartre taught philosophy for a living he "carried out the task allotted to him by the state. He transmitted bourgeois knowledge" (and with "mental agility and literary talent", too, the hateful "prime qualities of the liberal intellectual"). And by omitting all mention of Sartre's philosophy, which is said to be initially a mere permutation of elements of bourgeois knowledge, is to fail to give a proper account of phenomenology, psychoanalysis or even Sartre's "progressive-regressive method" as a biographer. But Scriven's conclusion, on reading as an experiential process, is truly Sartrean inasmuch as it makes the appropriation and re-enactment of someone else's thought process the touchstone of a book's value.

Hollier presents his essay as an experiment in rhetoric. Jean-François Lyotard assures us that Hollier writes here "without love or hatred", though Hollier himself tells us that the audience at a colloquium thought he was "méchant" towards his subject. And why not? Sartre was not over-indulgent towards his fellow-writers, and in fact many of the attacks on him in this book consist in turning some of his own arguments back on him.

Lyotard having wistfully dreamt of "a rhetoric which could start a car", Hollier proposes to find out whether a car can start on rhetoric that is to say, "whether a reflection on machines can teach us what a sign is". We therefore have initially a sequence of associations about Sartre's views on perception and imagination, on time, on commitment, on prose and poetry, on intentionality, on seriality and the fused group, etc, linked by analyses of his treatment of cars, trains, pens, and so on. The rhetorical car stalls fairly quickly, however, and we settle down to a thematic study.

A car needs a driver; a driver needs an aim; both car and driver need fuel. The fuel in Hollier's case is plainly resentment against Sartre, conceived, as is all too common, as a strident apostle of plain speaking, for the sake of both a simplistic form of commitment and his macho neurosis, fiercely repressing the body and the power of language, dreams, poetry, and strangeness. Hollier is avenging all those risk-taking writers who have lived to the full the adventure of modernity. Yet surely, Sartre's life had its perils? In the line of duty he took mescaline, *orlédérine, corydane*, a lot of whiskey, and of course the famous apricot cocktail which revealed phenomenology to him. And "it is not too out of place", as Hollier would say, to recall that his flat in Paris was once bombed and that he brought on a stroke by writing the *Critique* in a hurry because he thought it might be useful in some way.

Witty, erudite and perceptive, Hollier's essay nevertheless contains a "métastasis" of the kind Lyotard claims post-modernity has left behind: the opposite of the ostensible "métastasis" in Sartre himself. The trouble is that this counter-narrative is found in Sartre, as a subterranean motive force. And it is unfortunate that Hollier's book has come out at more or less the same time as the recent publications by Sartre himself, which not only flatly refute some of its assertions, but demonstrate that Sartre could more than hold his own when it comes to self-debunking gusto.

As Jeannette Colombel has said, the "ethical" and the "imaginary" themes in Sartre are linked at the existential level: they both express the insight which made him write in the *Cahiers* that "Philosophy is nothing other than man chipping the world."

close community of intellectuals at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, his relationships there were not devoid of a somewhat strained ambivalence, well expressed in the curious phrase, "petits camarades". His relations with the other recruits in 1939-40 are not exempt from traces of power-seeking as he manipulates them thanks to what he calls his "moral pederasty" through many an excruciatingly funny socratic scene. But the self-portrait which he undertakes in the *Carnets* shows him self-mockingly yearning for the status not so much of king, since his irrepressible anarchism rules this out for him as for the others, as of sage. And he reaches this mystical pinnacle just before arriving at the Stalag, complete with beard, lice and dirt, which his comrades contemplate with "tenderness".

Striking up friendships with various monks and priests, Sartre writes, lectures on Heidegger, and studies both others and himself when he is plunged, after a "phony war", into a "phony time". As well as writing a "mystère" or Nativity play, he feeds on the "Mystères du Stalag". Already in the *Carnets*, the wish for a *vita nuova* is so strong, the ambition to reassess all personal and historical dimensions so wide-ranging, that it is difficult at times to remember that the writer here is not some gifted adolescent but already the author of *Le Mur*, *La Nausée* and three philosophical works, and the winner of a literary prize. Ignoring pallid intellectuals arrived straight from the Café de Flore, Sartre finds it more profitable to watch the "faces terreuses des agriculteurs aux longs pèts gémissants" or characters like Pieter, a wide boy who embodies his fascination with a teeming Parisian life. Thus he launches into a "portrait of the artist at thirty-five" which might lead him towards an "artistic maturity", an Age of Reason which would no longer cause him a mental depression as had happened in 1935. The results were later to overflow not only into philosophy, fiction and plays, but into the closely-related yet subtly distinct genres of the philosophical notebook, the real diary, the pseudo-diary (written after the event and printed as an appendix in the *Oeuvres romanesques*), the fictional diary (real but attributed to a character, as in the recently discovered "Journal de Mathieu", published in September 1982 issue of *Les Temps modernes*), autobiography, existential biography and autobiographical fiction, not to speak of real letters sent to Simone Jolivet, Simone de Beauvoir and others, but which Sartre thought were likely one day to be published. As he told Michel Contat, a novelist always more or less imagines reality.

The most striking moment in this process occurs with the confluence of Sartre's meditations on two books by Emil Ludwig, on Bismarck and Wilhelm II, when his observations of the man-in-the-street at war (Mathieu's surname is *Delarue*) and his self-analysis coalesce to produce the archetype of his later "existential" biographies. Just as Sartre always took for granted his own future glory, so Wilhelm was "born-to-reign". Like Sartre, he was shaped by his class and profession as an "abstract and uprooted being"; he also had a congenital defect of his left arm and had to invent a type of behaviour that would cope with this lack just as Sartre's "dead eye" determined his idea that he would seduce women by words alone, and unveil the world as his gift to them. Wilhelm's family was also dominated by a grandfather, not a father, and because his mother was Queen Victoria's daughter, humiliations at her hands ended up forming the equation: defeat of England = victory over his maimed body. Thus Wilhelm is not explained by his "character", rather, the latter is his free project as he "historicalizes" himself in the world. Man is both author and actor in his own drama.

The *Carnets* present Sartre's whole hermeneutic enterprise as part of a magical attempt to appropriate beauty; his philosophy is thus expressly linked with his early project of being a seducer through words. Don Juan Chrysostom, so to speak. His "honesty" quite often takes the form of power-games in which his female partners are necessarily in an inferior strategic position. All the more so since Sartre functions best as a member of an intellectual couple, with Nizan or Beauvoir, and readily recognizes the intimidation which results for those who are drawn into their circle,

who must accept its law, a "publicity" of his life which Camus, and even Beauvoir herself, found it difficult to accept.

His expulsion of the Ego from consciousness "like an indiscreet visitor" in his first philosophical work certainly made it easier for Sartre to behave as arbiter of the authentic and inauthentic. But "honesty" required that someone should guard the norm, even when Sartre, for the first and only time according to him, was disturbed by the proximity of a human being who genuinely sought to live from moment to moment, in the ecstasy of a "sensual and instantaneous magnificence". The guardian, Beauvoir, and this exceptional being, Olga, then tried to innovate in the realm of human relationships, just as they thought could be done in any other area, by forming the "trio" which served as the model for the plots of several of their fictional works: the first test for this famous prototype of the open marriage, but by no means the last.

The kaleidoscope of shifting relationships in the *Lettres* has reminded many French readers of *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, especially when Sartre describes to Beauvoir his frequent quarrels with the tempestuous Tania or his deflowering of a student of philosophy who seems to have recruited her lovers by asking for advice on her thesis. But here the twentieth century is in considerable regression from the eighteenth, since the new Merteuil is content to listen to Valmont's confidences without retaliating with some choice ones of her own—Wanderlust, for Beauvoir, seems to have fulfilled all the requirements of lust. Her own letters are not published, nor are any of those from Sartre's other correspondents, and this increases the impression of his imperialism.

Evidently the protagonists of a sexual relationship, secure in their awareness of a "necessary" love, feel free to dissect every aspect of other, "contingent" loves. After the "humiliations" of his adolescence, Sartre seems to have needed this unconditional support from a mother figure. The situation is not without its comical aspects. After having celebrated their eleven years of marriage—since he argues that this is what they have had—Sartre asks urgently for Beauvoir's advice: should he propose to Tania? This would keep her quiet since he would be granted three days' leave, and anything for a quiet life. The fondness for gossip which Beauvoir describes in her autobiography is abundantly demonstrated here, and sometimes merges fascinatingly before our eyes into novelistic inspiration or philosophical discovery, like when Sartre describes to another mistress (one of the ten or eleven in the book and, once more, a friend of Beauvoir's) a conversation with his "morgant spouse" about the "nouvelle méthode [que] j'avais employée pour te raconter ma vie".

The *Lettres* are also interesting because they seem to qualify by now commonplace assumptions about Sartre's experience of reality and his distrust of sensuality (in the *Carnets* he describes himself unhesitatingly as a "pisse-froid" with a "sang pauvre"). But might this distrust not be due to his overwhelming responsiveness to the sensuous aspects of the world and to the flesh in all its coarseness, a responsiveness which makes the safeguarding of lucidity imperative in someone who has chosen it as his supreme value?

It is instructive to compare such reactions to passages where Sartre reflects on passion and poetry, those two great manifestations of *Pinnaginaire*. He doesn't say much about them, any more than he does about anxiety or music, but enough for us to know that they all but govern his life. He prefers to write about the "honesty" which he allows to ruin many a *moment précieux*. When he decides to write a poem—with a touching humility which demonstrates that his admiration for that genre is supreme—it is on the same theme as "L'Azur" (by the subject of one of his biographies, Mallarmé); a lament for winter, the season of staidism and lucidity, at the approach of unsettling spring. It was not just that Sartre felt that writing a poem was an obscenity for him but, as Beauvoir has testified, that the philosophical figure he already represented for his entourage seemed to rule out such sentimental activities. Also, as becomes obvious in the *Carnets*, his need for "periodicity" and epic amplitude were not satisfied by modern poetry, which, if

semantic and "retractile".

Finally, the *Lettres* confirm Sartre's ardent desire to change and to abjure his "unspeakable weightlessness". Like Oreste welcoming the burden of a murder, he embraces the shame and guilt caused by a particularly tortuous chapter in his love life in which, the usual simultaneous machinations having misfired, he conceived the idea of sending a brutal letter to one of his partners through a second partner whom this was meant to reassure—while giving as usual a blow-by-blow account to Beauvoir, his "judge". Degraded as he felt by this episode, he also appreciated the sensation of getting out of his depth, both in anger and in the revulsion which prompted him henceforth to renounce such adventures.

One other dimension of these *Lettres* gives them a more than anecdotal interest: the language Sartre and Beauvoir use. So idiosyncratic at times that it is almost private, it adds much to the amusement of the reader (note the odd use of *béats, cupides, plaisant, gonflant, le sou, factums, gaillard, la vie de Tennyson* (—uneventful happiness), or innumerable variations on Merleau-Ponty's name). This inventiveness exhibits a careful appropriation of the full spectrum of the French language which was surely the origin of a veritable change in the *langue* itself, through its subsequent adoption by the media. It is the whole of France, now, which speaks *le langage intello*, with its mixture of social-sciences jargon and a slang whose multi-layered genealogy is deftly traced by Sartre.

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would have made. He does sound rather dour.

So Wiseman, Manning and Vaughan it was: ultramontanians, infallibility and plenty of purple patches from the Flaminian Gate to the mosaics in Westminster Cathedral. Wiseman, the oddest of the three, is on a superficial view not a good illustration of Norman's theme, since he was heavily into Steam, Factories and the Spirit of the Age. Norman quotes him preaching in Salford on the union of those two symbols which are here: on the one side, those vast and darkened piles of building which fill your city with their full [sic: ?all] columns above which the banner of industry ever streams in the wind; and, on the other, the vast magnificent church of God, with its spire bearing the symbol of peace and salvation.

This was fun. You would not have had it from Ullathorne or Errington. To get it, it was probably worth putting up with the stuff at the Flaminian Gate, his persecution of nice Bishop Grant of Southwark who naturally wanted some of the former London District's assets. His habit of losing vital papers and generally sowing confusion all around him. He does not seem an entirely serious person, but he certainly offered an imaginative version of the something else which Norman is looking for.

Manning was serious enough. I had the feeling that he was intended to be Norman's hero, but it didn't quite work out. Perhaps the refusal of access to the papers in France was more of an irritation than Norman allows to appear. Or perhaps the business of the Duck Strike, though explained away as what any bishop worth his salt was doing at the time, rankles a bit. Norman makes the right noises, at the least the right noises for him: of Manning's *The Eternal Priesthood*, which was still being read by my contemporaries (now mostly married) who went off to be priests thirty years ago— "a spiritual classic"; of Manning's view of the issue facing the Catholic community during his long reign (1865-92)—"the battle . . . between

Ultramontanians and a slide into easy Catholic acceptance of the surrounding English religious sense"; of the crowds at Manning's funeral—"They were the poor and the uneducated and those who had sensed in the Cardinal some quality of eternity whose definition or content they could not even begin to comprehend." But by the end of a longish chapter, even as he was dealing with one of Manning's most successful lines of action, his co-operation with the Education Act of 1870, I did not have the impression that Norman had got out of Manning quite what he was looking for. "Manning is rightly remembered for his love of the poor" is by his standards a pretty tepid conclusion.

Herbert Vaughan, no doubt, raised fewer problems. He was an uncomplicated, unintellectual labourer in the vineyard who did a solid episcopal job in Salford, launched solid good works of a counter-reformation kind like the Missionary College at Mill Hill and the Crusade of Rescue, built a solid cathedral at Westminster and ended his life with the solid achievement of the equality of Catholic and other primary schools in the Conservative Education Act of 1902. He was, says Norman rather oddly, "delivered into eternity" on the feast of the Sacred Heart the following year. Vaughan was the only son of the English Catholic gentry to reach a position of power in English Catholicism since the eighteenth century, and despite some appearances his archiepiscopate was something of a return to traditional English Catholic ways after forty years of otherness. In 1895, at the end of a long and futile story of attempts to find an alternative, Vaughan finally allowed Catholics to go to the English universities. A blow against otherness, surely; but also, surely, a blow for growing up, not to mention happiness. "How far can you go?" would be a question for the future. I am sure Dr Norman has his own excellent reasons for not answering it.

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In 1948, for most purposes, the Palestinians ceased to exist. Various identities were ascribed to them, for example those of Arabs, Jordanians, Israelis, or simply refugees. Their natural and historic rights were frequently proclaimed but they themselves had become mere objects of history: the Arab-Israeli conflict was regarded as a dispute between Israel and certain Arab states in which Palestinian claims figured as a prominent issue advanced by non-Palestinians. As late as 1967, in the famous UN Security Council Resolution 242, the Palestinians were regarded as merely a refugee problem. The subsequent return of the Palestinians to centre stage was largely the work of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the subject of the three books under review.

The PLO arouses the strongest feelings, the range of which is here well displayed. Abdalla Frangi, who is the PLO representative in West Germany, and Helena Cobban, a journalist, present sympathetic portraits of the Organization, although the latter also displays moderation, detachment and critical judgment. Jillian Becker, who has previously written on the Baader-Meinhof gang, offers a very hostile view, not easily distinguished from that proclaimed by the Israeli Government. Leaving aside some uncertain comments on the earlier history of Palestine, all the books have value for the information they contain and for the lucid fashion in which they present different views. In particular, those of Cobban and Becker incorporate material gleaned from observation, interviews and wide reading; taken together they provide a suitable introduction to the subject, although the former would have been much more useful had an index been provided. All three books cover much the same ground: they describe the general background, the history and organization of the PLO, and analyse its role in the political events of the past twenty years. With so much common ground how do they come to such different conclusions?

A fundamental point of disagreement concerns the existence of the Palestinians, for if they do not exist then any organization which claims to represent them must be fraudulent. This is Becker's view: there has never been a state of Palestine, the refugees of 1948 were mainly recent arrivals in Palestine, the Palestinians are part of a more or less undifferentiated mass of Arabs, the PLO is the creature of Arab governments intent on their own purposes and it lacks any durable roots in the hearts of the people. She is not wholly consistent in maintaining these propositions: for example she concedes that the Arabs are not, after all, a single people but "a large number of people with different origins, cultures, creeds, traditions and aspirations", and she complains that the Palestinians have always suffered from bad leaders, which would be difficult if they did not exist. But it seems fair to say that her condemnation of the PLO derives from her view of the Organization as a monstrous deception; its activities cannot be excused or even palliated by the argument that they are performed in a good or legitimate cause. To Dr Frangi, on the other hand, such denial of Palestinian identity is perverse; he argues that the Palestinian Arab identity is several thousand years old and the Jewish presence in Palestine merely a passing and superficial phenomenon - indeed it is the Jewish political identity which he questions.

Both writers appear to assume that identities are historic and unchanging, but this assumption is highly questionable. It is as perverse to deny that Palestinians are now conscious of a political identity as Palestinians as it is absurd to suppose that they felt the same way a hundred years ago. In the complex process of the formation of a Palestinian political identity the PLO has itself played a significant role and whether it represents the interests of the Palestinians for good or ill it certainly represents a reality.

In its origin in 1964 the PLO was the creation of Abd al-Nasser and was intended to advance Egyptian interests. In the same way and as a counterpoise, so Becker argues, Syria chose to patronize al-Fatah and directed its early operations. The Fatah version of its own origins does not mention Syrian sponsorship but stresses the steady evolution of the party from its beginnings in student discussions in Cairo, through years of planning in Kuwait, to the formal establishment of the party between 1958 and 1962. The decision to launch an armed struggle in December 1964 is claimed to be its own.

Whatever the truth about its origins there seems no doubt that Fatah's takeover of the PLO in 1968 owed nothing to the Arab states; it was the defeat of the Arab states in 1967 which gave Fatah its opportunity. By comparison with the rout of the Arab armies by Israel even the minor operation of Fatah at Karamah in March 1968 seemed like a triumph. Karamah was the Valmy of the Palestinian revolution; the reputation of the Palestinian guerrillas soared not only among the Palestinians but throughout the Arab world.

The dispute about the origins of the PLO highlights one of its enduring problems, namely its relations with the Arab states. Lacking its own territorial base the PLO depends upon the support of the so-called front-line Arab states - Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. What should be its relations with those states? One school of thought contended that the PLO could never have a secure base until the states

were in the hands of régimes utterly committed to support of the PLO, and advocated that the PLO should endeavour to bring such régimes to power. By extension it was argued that Arab unity and revolution must precede the recovery of Palestine. The Fatah leaders took a different view: the liberation of Palestine should be the first object of the PLO, which should eschew interference in the internal affairs of Arab states. The problem has never been resolved: in Jordan and in Lebanon the PLO was drawn into internal conflicts; and the Arab states have never been able to keep their hands off the PLO.

Cobban implies that Fatah made a serious mistake in 1968 when it refused an opportunity to make the PLO its exclusive property and instead brought with it into the Organization the smaller, independent guerrilla groups. It has been the smaller groups which have especially stressed the factors of Arab unity and world revolution as preconditions of Palestinian success and have involved the Organization in acts of international terrorism; they have also often supplied the means by which the Arab states could influence the PLO. The preservation of the unity of the PLO in the face of conflicts concerning the means it should employ was possible only through inflexible adherence to the ultimate goals of the Organization as set out in its charter.

The ostensible goal of the PLO is the creation of a democratic state within the boundaries of mandatory Palestine and therefore the extinction of the state of Israel and the removal from Palestine of the majority of its Jewish inhabitants. As it is virtually impossible to obtain a majority to change the goal any change must be presented only as a change of means. Accordingly, the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and in Gaza is presented only as the first stage on the way to the achievement of the ultimate goal. This is an unconvincing position from which to enter a negotiation for the permanent settlement of the dispute and its adoption facilitates the avoidance by Israel of a decision on the question of

whether she ever intends to relinquish control over the West Bank.

The question remains whether the Fatah leadership has in reality abandoned its goal (which comes to much the same thing) and renounced the intention of pursuing it by force. Becker believes that the Fatah leaders are worthless; vicious men infatuated by dreams and devoid of any sense of reality, the willing tools of designing Arab rulers. Cobban, on the other hand, stresses the continuity and stability of the Fatah leadership. The cooperation of Yasir Arafat, Khalil al-Wazir, Khalid al-Hassan, Salah Khalaf and Faruq Qaddumi extends over a quarter of a century or more. And to have survived the defeats in Jordan in 1970 and in Syria in 1976 and in 1982 is no mean achievement. Even after the ignominious retreat from Tripoli in 1983 Arafat regained the initiative with his visit to Egypt. And during these years the PLO has steadily advanced both its international standing, gaining widespread recognition as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and its standing among the Palestinians of the West Bank and of Israel itself. Only a bold commander would predict that the PLO will not survive its present difficulties.

It is difficult to like the PLO. To those who feel neither enthusiasm for, or even interest in, its goals, the single-minded ruthlessness with which it pursues them and the barbarities of some of its hangers-on are singularly distasteful. One of the most revealing stories in Jillian Becker's book is told by Mansur Labaki, a Maronite priest in Damour in Lebanon who was alarmed one morning in January 1976 by the firing which presaged a murderous onslaught on the town by a coalition of Muslim militias led by Zuhair Muhsein, the leader of al-Saiga, a PLO group. Labaki sought help, was referred to Yasir Arafat, and spoke with one of his aides on the telephone. He was told not to worry. "We don't want to harm you, we are destroying you it is for strategic reasons."

reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country". The wording is sound, but clearly needs interpretation. As Mr Goodwin-Gill writes: "A decision on the well-foundedness or not of a fear of persecution is essentially an essay in hypothesis, an attempt to prophesy what might happen to the applicant in the future, if returned to his or her country of origin." He then examines in detail the five relevant grounds for granting refugee status and the notions of persecution and of absence of protection.

The book goes on to describe the loss or denial of refugee status together with its benefits on the four following grounds: voluntary acts of the individual; change of circumstances; the granting of protection or assistance by other states (a practice which has no legal basis whatsoever in the Geneva Convention, as the French Conseil d'Etat held in the important *Conté* case in 1981, not mentioned here) or other United Nations agencies (this applies to Palestinian refugees in the UNRWA area of operations); and finally certain categories of serious crime.

Goodwin-Gill's study of the essential principle of *non-refoulement*, or non-expulsion of refugees, both its limits and its effects on deportation laws and extradition treaties, is a model of clarity and precision. So is his treatment of the right to asylum or, more exactly, the absence of it in international law: "The political and legal reality is that States generally have not undertaken, and foreseeably will not undertake, an obligation to grant asylum in the sense of a lasting solution... State practice... permits only one conclusion: the individual still has no right to be granted asylum." The abject failure of the 1977 UN conference on territorial asylum needs no further comment. The status and mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is also examined.

Legal adviser, are thoroughly examined. The agency, which is charged with the protection of refugees, has the power to decide who comes within its jurisdiction under its 1950 Statute or, as Goodwin-Gill adds, under "any relevant General Assembly resolutions". The latter have progressively widened the High Commissioner's mandate.

A wealth of references to both international and national law adds to the value of this important and timely book, which is published eleven years after volume 2 of A. Grahl-Madsen's *The Status of Refugees in International Law*. Its sobering and realistic views are totally devoid of hypocrisy or wishful thinking. "Refugee Law", Goodwin-Gill writes, "remains an incomplete legal regime of protection." This is so for a number of reasons. One is "the impracticability of individual determinations in the case of large movements of asylum-seekers", another the fact that the Geneva Convention, the main instrument binding on states, excludes in most cases not only people fleeing war-zones but also "economic" refugees. A third reason might be that in Asia, for example, only a minority of states, and not very relevant ones at that, have so far ratified the Convention and the 1967 Protocol (viz Iran, Israel, Japan, China, the Philippines and the Arab Republic of Yemen). In most Western states today the limitation or suspension of immigration has given refugee status an enhanced value. Of the two "permanent solutions for the problem of refugees" mentioned in the UNHCR Statute of 1950, "voluntary repatriation", of which there are very few examples, is either only a remote hope or totally out of the question, so that "assimilation" within new national communities (resettlement would be a more appropriate and realistic term) tends to become the only attainable objective. While in the 1950s and 60s the problem of refugees was such that progress in their protection in both international and national law was possible and indeed achieved, the same can no longer be said of the

Doctor in the dock

P. D. James

PERCY HOSKINS

Two Men Were Acquitted: The Trial and Acquittal of Doctor John Bodkin Adams
221pp. Secker and Warburg. £9.95.
0 436 20161 5

Percy Hoskins is particularly well qualified to write about the Bodkin Adams case. Not only is he the crime consultant to the *Daily Express*, after forty-five years' experience as the paper's chief crime reporter, but, almost alone in Fleet Street, he believed from the first breaking of the Eastbourne scandal that the doctor was innocent. Strongly supported by his editor, Edward Pickering (the publishers have pointed out on an erratum slip that the blurb, which says the opposite, is here inaccurate), he maintained this unpopular view in the face of mounting pressure from the paper's proprietor. Since the proprietor was Lord Beaverbrook, this stand required considerable courage, and if Mr Hoskins's account of the case betrays some self-satisfaction he is more than entitled to it. This personal involvement fully justifies another book on the trial to add to Sybille Bedford's admirable account, *The Best we can Do*. Hoskins takes his title from Beaverbrook after the verdict. One wonders which of the defendants was the more relieved.

The facts are simply stated. On March 18, 1957, Dr John Bodkin Adams, an Eastbourne general practitioner, stood trial at the Old Bailey accused of murdering one of his patients, eighty-year-old Mrs Edith Alice Morrell. Mrs Morrell, a wealthy widow, had died over six years earlier on November 13, 1950. The doctor treated both private and "panel" patients, many of the former the rich, lonely and elderly retired who congregated in southern seaside resorts, and his income as a fashionable physician had been augmented over the years by bequests from grateful patients. The motive alleged by the prosecution

was the modest expectation he had from the Morrell estate. The alleged method of murder was a deliberate overdose of the heroin and morphia which the patient was regularly receiving.

The trial was preceded by an unprecedented campaign of gossip, rumour and innuendo amounting to hysteria, suggesting that a mass poisoner had for years been secretly at work in Eastbourne preying on rich widows. Mass exhumations were said to be imminent. It was a campaign in which a number of national newspapers, but by no means all, enthusiastically joined. Worse, from the point of view of justice, was the fact that in the preliminary hearing, the magistrates rejected an application by Adams's counsel that the case should be heard in closed court, with the result that the proceedings were made public, including evidence relating to the death of another patient. These disclosures (a total of seventeen charges were listed at the lower court, most of them comparatively minor) could not fail to be damaging to the defendant and a number of those attending the trial must have experienced the frisson of watching a man already more than halfway to the scaffold.

Hoskins wrote his account soon after the trial when the events were fresh in his mind, but publication was deferred until Bodkin Adams and Superintendent Herbert Hannam, who was in charge of the investigation, were both dead. Hoskins is critical of the Superintendent and, with more reason, of the evidence of the distinguished Dr Arthur Douthwaite, the chief medical expert brought in by the prosecution. The whole case makes fascinating reading and throws an intriguing light on the capacity of human beings for self-deception, arrogance and credulity. The evidence of the two nurses who attended Mrs Morrell, vital to the prosecution's case, was discredited when their notebooks were unexpectedly and dramatically produced by the defence; the medical experts disagreed (not surprisingly since the patient had died six years earlier and had been

seen by none of them); and the judge, Mr Justice Devlin as he then was, summed up so clearly for an acquittal that it is slightly surprising that the jury took forty-four minutes to reach the expected verdict. What had seemed a rock-fast edifice of proof crumbled as slowly and inevitably as a fragile house of cards.

There can be few murder trials resulting in a verdict of not guilty which hold their interest after twenty-seven years and John Bodkin Adams, hardly an ornament to his profession, is nevertheless sure of his place in the annals of British justice. After the acquittal there was wide public concern, not only at the prejudice created by the damaging allegations openly made in the Magistrates' Court but by what Michael Foot described as "one of the most appalling and shameful examples of newspaper sensationalism and persecution in the history of British journalism". The lessons were learned and, as the late Lord Wigg wrote in his autobiography: "In the years since, no such scandalous treatment as Adams suffered has besmirched the reputation of British justice."

It is the doctor's misfortune that the power of rumour persists after public exoneration and, as recent newspaper articles have shown, the name Bodkin Adams, to some sceptics, is less synonymous with virtue unjustly put in peril than with undeserved good luck. But there is no evidence in Hoskins's book that the doctor's life was unduly burdened by this injustice. He lived to the age of eighty-four and died three days after breaking a leg while engaged in his favourite sport of clay-pigeon shooting. He left more than £400,000 net, some of this the result of thirteen libel actions.

The British adversarial system of criminal justice is not, of course, designed to elicit the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, even supposing such an ideal were attainable for fallible humans. But, had I been a member of that Old Bailey jury, I should have been interested, indeed eager, to hear the defendant's own explanation of a course of medical treatment which other doctors, who

had neither seen nor examined the patient, were so busy either explaining or condemning. I should have liked, too, to have heard his explanation of his system of drug control, or lack of it. But, had I been his counsel, I should have kept him out of the box at all costs. Geoffrey Lawrence, who conducted a brilliant defence, did just that, carefully and persuasively explaining to the jury why he felt that his client should be spared this culminating ordeal.

One interesting unanswered question among many is why the doctor was so unpopular. It is easy to protest that, in fact, he wasn't; that his patients, rich and poor, respected and stood by him. But a considerable number of people were, nevertheless, apparently prepared to believe that this chubby, balding and unremarkable man was the Eastbourne Bluebeard. Perhaps the prejudice which nearly brought him to the scaffold arises from the unattractive mixture of avarice, hypocrisy and stupidity which, for me, comes out clearly from Hoskins's essentially fair account. The judge, in his summing-up, said: "Members of the jury, you may well come to the conclusion that the doctor was a fraudulent rogue", while going on to emphasize that fraudulent rogery is one thing, murder quite another. Allowing for some natural restraint, the judge's words seem a fair enough summing-up of the gentleman in question. It is, perhaps, neither kind nor prudent to submit such a character to too great temptation. If I ever find myself a rich and lonely old woman in an English seaside resort, and my doctor in the least reminds me of John Bodkin Adams, I think I shall leave him a modest legacy on the understanding that he keeps me alive for the next twenty years.

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Epiphanies and apocalypse

Michael O'Neill

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Edible Anecdotes and other poems
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"All I know is a door into the dark" begins one of Seamus Heaney's poems. By entering the door, Heaney finds himself, as Wallace Stevens puts it, more truly and more strange. Matthew Sweeney starts the third stanza of his poem "The Domestic Slugs" with an echo of Heaney's line: "All I know is the tracks I find". But the lines that follow don't share the older poet's trust in imagination; rather, they tease us with deftly cryptic possibilities: "that complex, crystalline structure / spun out, a pattern, on the dead carpet". As elsewhere in *A Round House*, Sweeney waives depth of feeling in favour of perceptual sleight-of-hand. He is more a poet of the world than the self, the world as seen through a pair of inventive, sometimes tricky eyes.

Sweeney can do a certain type of personal poem well. "The Letter" succeeds by virtue of its perfectly managed wryness: "Here in a small flat inland / the view is frozen, the postman god, / A meter heats the days; the bin is emptied. / He writes to say how he envies me." This compares favourably with the title poem's jarring flourish - "I will invest in a gun". Sweeney would do well to leave dreams of island solitude to others; his gifts are roused more by the stimuli of urban living. "The Kids" is fairly representative. Its subject-matter shows a flair for the contemporary and its conclusion hovers interestingly on the brink of a decent minimum of sympathy: "But for now they shroud-up the street, / walk on, retracing their paths / like tributaries back to hills / of concrete, glass & graffiti". Elsewhere, the

stance of spectator yields richer dividends. "Golf" is a supple, amusing poem in which Sweeney's individual voice comes over well: "Often counting is a sadness / best kept strictly private / but the sea is a glamorous companion . . .". He tackles the big public subjects with confidence, though he doesn't always carry total conviction. This is mainly a matter of tone: "The Vanished" seems to forget the true horror of its theme, becoming engrossed in its own figurative cleverness. Perhaps the real point of the poem's strangely trivial final image - "like a man in a Western who sees an empty coffin" - is the difficulty of adequate response. By contrast, "Preparation for Survival" creates a plausible post-nuclear quietude, the nightmare sharpened by the doggedness with which the poem's subject would seem to hold it at bay. A fine rhetorician, with a good ear for first lines and an assured sense of how to structure a poem, Sweeney is a promising and talented poet.

The sequence of poems which gives Julie O'Callaghan's first collection *Edible Anecdotes* its title is in danger of pushing a funny idea too relentlessly. In her zestful monologues, O'Callaghan pinpoints many aspects of her subject - food: the paths of its use as a refuge from tension ("I became depressed / and clutched something to renew my spirits; / Frozen Chocolate Cream Pie"), the peculiarly gross nature of its marketing in affluent societies (in one darkly amusing poem, a shop assistant lays bare the ploys by which a customer is snared). O'Callaghan exposes without moralizing. But her fidelity to the voices she mimics is the chief drawback of the sequence. Simply to immerse the reader in a trough of fretful greed, with only the occasional, elegant cadence to cling to - "it was an idiosyncratic midwestern day" - is to risk a restriction of range.

O'Callaghan's observations seem more knowing and less humane than those in the poetry of William Carlos Williams which they sometimes recall. Put two girls / old enough to wear pantyhose / against the beautiful passage in *Patersson* about "Two halfgrown girls hailing hallowed Easter", and you realize how resolutely O'Callaghan shuts out a subdued richness present in Williams. The best things in the second half of the book are further self-betraying monologues from figures who make easy butts for satire: admirers of Nixon, lovers of Chicago, an American visiting Ireland (this last a particularly funny and double-edged piece). Julie O'Callaghan writes with great verve and wit; it will be interesting to see whether she remains content with these qualities in future volumes.

Eavan Boland's fine new collection, *Night Feed*, contains a manifesto-like poem called "Patchwork or The Poet's Craft". The alternative title is unnecessary, but the triumphant conclusion - "these are not bits, / they are pieces / and the pieces fit" - catches the satisfying impact of Boland's poems. The click with which they come together is almost audible, and yet they manage not to seem merely contrived. Each poem is a taut, highly personal

drama, often connected to the poet's complex sense of the joys and pains of motherhood. The bitterness of Boland's previous collection, *In Her Own Image*, has largely given way to a more controlled intensity:

Even the moon is losing face.
Poplars still for dawn
And we begin
The long fall from grace.
I tuck you in.

The tension between the "brute routines" of existence and its brief epiphanies informs many of Boland's poems. "Monotony" and "The Muse Mother" for example. Because of their sense of possible "gleams", these are more intriguing than a poem like "Woman in Kitchen", which works simply by isolating the "white" strand of Sylvia Plath's "Little Fugue": the white of featureless drabness, living death. By contrast, "Monotony", tense and questioning, holds boredom at arm's length. The third section consists of poems which are obsessed by gender-conditioning, role-playing, inner emptiness. These poems draw on another element in Plath, the savage mock exhibitionism of poems like "Lady Lazarus": "I tug. Here comes a smile. / Years of smiles. Look / Lugged and blind. They stink." This poem, "The Woman as Mummy's Head", drives towards the centre of self, only to find "absences of me" which need to be "poulticed" by the old "shams". Yet the poems about motherhood in the first section of this rewarding volume offer a subtler, more haunting version of identity.

One of Yeats's late poems contains these ringing but inhuman lines: "Hector is dead and there's a light in Troy; / We that look on but laugh in tragic joy". Brian Coffey's long poem, *Death of Hektor*, eschews such posturing; "tragic joy" yields in his meditation on the myth to compassionate dread. A single simile gives that dread its contemporary focus: "And / Doom now in the air like a cloudy mushroom swags above Troy". The poem concludes with a picture of "Andromache lamenting / like any woman victim of any war". But though Coffey's attitudes may seem more sympathetic than some Yeats adopted, his use of language, unsurprisingly, lags behind. Stan Smith has admired the "stubborn ordinariness" of Coffey's poetry. And certainly his words come across as honestly weighed. But Coffey's is a style which, with its inversions, ellipses and air of translatoresse, walks a tight-rope. Occasionally its starkness seems a manipulative short-cut. Troy, for instance, is an "image of past or future ravishment of any city / ready like trash junk rubble for earth-mover caput out". Yet there are moments of poignant eloquence.

Springlight, Michael Ó Siadhail's accomplished first collection in English, would seem

sympathetic to another late-Yeatsian poem the conviction that "Processions that last stiffs have nothing that catches the eye". Ó Siadhail's poems move between the piously conversational and something more grandiloquent: "Although I celebrate, I hear the metronome's / Remorseless beat / rubato here, no facile emancipation". He is inclined to overload his poems with allusions, to talk about, rather than re-create, experience. To assert, for instance, that "tremendous profusion of existence exists" ("April Soliloquy") is not enough; the reader is entitled to something more imaginative. Ó Siadhail is more than capable of supplying that something extra is evidenced by the brilliant flashes of observation which run throughout the volume. Though the poems always thoughtful and often moving.

For all its modernist packaging - little punctuation, poems in the margin counterpointing the main text - Desmond Egan's erratic, exuberant collection *Seeing Double* opens its cards-on-the-table straightforwardness. Poetic attitudes are proclaimed rather than explored; their rightness is taken for granted. Poems like "Ground Zero", "Germany" and "Hunger Striker" attain, at best, an indigenous sincerity, but it's possible to feel sceptical about the value of such hectoring wisdom as "I have learned that / politics is mostly impotence in drag" or "seven hundred years the sudden it / and / nothing to offer except a carbon". Egan finds a focus for his zest and humour in relatively unambitious poem such as "God bye Old Flat". But the breezy lightness which charms here is out of place in an elegy "Eugene Watters is Dead", where recollection has to compete with the poet's brand of anguish. On the other hand, "Twenty Years" another elegy, keeps comment to a minimum and lets images of memory do the work.

George Buchanan's poetic voice is understated, but has enough wry intelligence to avoid prosiness. Sometimes the poetic effect in his new collection seems over-modest: "one argued for / mutual reliance all round" how yet another "nuclear" poem concludes. He grows more exciting when he develops an idea imaginatively; "Invitation" is especially interesting for its modulations of tone and viewpoint. Again, the second section of "Atmosphere" - "He dreams of Ireland whole / without irreconcilable portions" - redeemed from obviousness by being set against the drifting intimations of the opening "What is atmosphere? Whispers / from / hawthorn hedge?" The best poems in *Adjacent Columns* occupy a middle ground between the flat and the whimsical; they offer an experience rather than an assemblage of views.

Caprice des Dieux

Our trolley groaning under the weight of *Requiem* Hewitt, a *Port Salut* from Mont-Aigu.

Heaney's monumental *Emmenthal*, Mahon wrapped in vine-leaves or *au poivre*.

Longley's *Brie* of Bessie Smith L.P.'s, the remains of Simmons.

the warmly-remembered *Camembert* of Courson, Ormsby's sane *Bendway au From*.

St-Paulin, his own map, the silk of McGuckinn's ewe's milk, I give them all, I give them all their due. For myself? A little *Caprice des Dieux*.

Gambling confectioners

Richard Osborne

JOHN ROSSELLI
The Opera Industry in Italy from Cimarosa to Verdi: The role of the impresario
214pp. Cambridge University Press. £19.50 (paperback, £7.95).
0521257328

Auden once commended Jane Austen for revealing with such sobriety the economic basis of society, a compliment that might well be re-applied to John Rosselli's new book, which casts a sober but not unsmiling eye over the economics of nineteenth-century Italian opera. Like all emergent popular forms of entertainment - cinema and association football provide useful parallels in our own century - opera in the period about which Mr Rosselli writes was in some substantial measure the creature of social and economic conditions. "The only necessary man is the cashier", observed the baritone Achille De Bassini in 1851. If the Paris Opéra was, in Verdi's phrase, "la grande boutique", Italian opera, Rosselli suggests, was more like a great bazaar, a self-generating, self-regulating economic system, at once complex and local.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, most Italian opera houses remained in the gift of royalty, the papal authorities, or wealthy families; but though such people owned and controlled the theatres, it was entrepreneurs who ran them and exploited their commercial potential, masterminding a complex ensemble of musicians, singers, librettists and composers. (In the early years of the century, the impresario's contract was more concerned with the commissioning of new works than the restaging of old ones.) Rosselli sketches for us outline portraits of some of the more remarkable of these men: Pietro Cartoni, grocer and confectionery specialist, who worked for the Capranica family in Rome; another Roman, the tight-fisted fishmonger, Vincenzo Jacobacci, who dominated Roman theatrical life in the mid-century; and the remarkable Bartolomeo Merelli who, at the height of his career as impresario, is thought to have written about 8,000 letters a year, many of them in the post office where he collected his mail.

That literacy and good breeding were not necessary pre-conditions for success in this rough-and-tumble business is amply confirmed

by the career of Domenico Barbaja, to whom Rosselli rightly devotes a good deal of attention. Barbaja began his working life in Milan as a waiter and general factotum, a real-life, ill-spoken, partially literate Figaro. Confectionery and gambling were his specialties, both of which made money in the spacious foyers of the Italian opera houses of the time. Barbaja made his first fortune in Milan before moving through Italy with the advancing French armies (roulette was a new craze), carving up the lucrative theatrical empires of Milan, Venice and, finally, Naples, where he settled in 1809. It is well known that when the San Carlo theatre burned down in February 1816 it was rebuilt within a year; what is less well known are the complex legal and financial arrangements which enabled Barbaja to undertake the rebuilding on behalf of the newly restored Bourbon régime. Barbaja was, among many other things, a successful building contractor; contracted to rebuild the Naples theatre, he advanced the cash in return for an unusually favourable return from the theatre's gambling revenues. It is not part of Rosselli's brief to look at the other side of Barbaja, the man who created the conditions in which artistic talent so abundantly flourished. Without Barbaja, Rosselli's crucial Neapolitan period would probably never have been, with a consequent slowing of the evolution of those forms which Rossini so productively bequeathed to his immediate successors. Rosselli pays generalized tribute to Barbaja's artistic achievements, but the details remain buried in the primary sources to which his footnotes so copiously refer.

The world in which Barbaja worked was a hierarchical one - something reflected in the language used by impresarios with its mixture of threats, imprecations, obscenities and courteous circumlocutions. Though opera itself was above meaner art forms - spoken theatre, music hall, circuses - the stratifications within the form were strict, with major differences in status and cost between *opera seria*, the grandest, costliest and socially most acceptable form, the more sentimental *opera semiseria*, and the lower-class *opera buffa*, which required neither a large chorus nor historically accurate sets and costumes. Thus, until 1838 it cost more to hear *Semiramide* at La Scala than *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Elements of this remain, of course. Though we are spared the military being given priority for front of stalls seats

(with the additional privilege of being allowed to stand, wilfully obscuring the view for those behind) many older houses retain the hierarchical ranking of tiers and boxes. Those sitting in the Amphitheatre of the Royal Opera House still enter by the tradesmen's door in Floral Street and eat and drink in separate bars; nor do those sitting in the Amphitheatre belong to the lowest reaches of society, which were equally absent from the nineteenth-century Italian houses. The servant problem has, however, vanished. In the nineteenth century, as Rosselli graphically relates, the corridors were often blocked with milling servants, many of whom declined to use the buckets provided and contented themselves with urinating freely wherever the need arose.

At the heart of the book are numerous charts and financial tables setting out and analysing theatre accounts of the time. Reading these is not easy, for as Rosselli admits in a disarmingly frank appendix, it is well-nigh impossible to relate obscure currencies of a hundred years ago to present-day prices. We can, however, observe proportions and general problems: the high cost of soloists (between 45 per cent and 55 per cent of the total bill), the cost of energy (lighting costs money irrespective of the source: pure wax, olive oil, gas or electricity); above all, the persistent fear that the high cost of mounting this exotic and irrational art form is going finally to outstrip the resources of the market. There are also many revealing figures in the main body of Rosselli's text; one's sympathies go out to the 427 solo singers (including seventy-eight *prima donne*) who were plying for parts in Milan in July 1861.

Occasionally, Rosselli is tempted into making general statements that don't entirely hold true. Though it is true that in the early years of the century operatic composition was a form of high-speed journalism (Stendhal's chapter on the impresario in his *Vie de Rossini* brilliantly caricatures the process), there is no evidence that "it took Bellini's genius . . . to impose on the opera world his need for time". Rossini's

Naples years - with Colbran and Barbaja - show very clearly a more and more leisurely concern with the building of an artistically satisfying sequence of major works (the progress through *Mosè in Egitto* and *La Donna del lago* to the imposing and powerful *Moisè et Aaron* is a striking one). Contrary to popular supposition, Rossini was by nature a rather circumspect man; *Guillaume Tell* (not, admittedly, an Italian work) was planned over many years and completed in a country house near Paris in circumstances of which the mature Verdi could well have approved.

Guillaume Tell was, of course, Rossini's last opera, and why it was his last opera - inasmuch as Rossini was instinctively aware of social, economic and artistic forces pressing upon his creative world - might partly be explained by the picture Rosselli sets before us of the slow hardening of Italy's operatic arteries (with Verdi the robust exception) from 1830 onwards. Industrialization took its toll: the beginnings of suburban sprawl and the building of bigger and better theatres to cater for an increasing population of theatregoers. As communities dispersed and as a newer and larger public wanted more of the same (established works) in more and more variant forms (new soloists, new productions, new spectacle), so the leaving role of the impresario as middle-man between patrons, public, singers and composers was more and more restricted. Agents appear; and the great publishing houses begin to undertake the commissioning of a declining number of new works. Rosselli tells us that La Scala, Milan - a house that developed comparatively late - was most productive of new works between 1831 and 1840; but that was a late flowering. The museum culture was in the ascendant; bespoke operas were increasingly a commercial liability. There is nothing new, of course, in that observation but Mr Rosselli's research - finely honed into a narrative that is both readable and informative - provides the kind of chapter and verse which many books on Italian opera inevitably lack.

Hymns and harmony

Nicholas Temperley

PETER CHARLTON
John Stainer and the Musical Life of Victorian Britain
231pp. Newton Abbot: David and Charles. £16.
0715383876

Sir John Stainer (1840-1901) was an eminent and much-loved figure of the late Victorian musical scene. But he has been a victim of the ferocious reaction against all things Victorian, which as far as music is concerned has far outlasted its legitimacy and, indeed, still prevails. As late as 1971 Kenneth Long went so far as to call Stainer's music "squalid". It is pleasing to see a champion coming forward at last. Peter Charlton has gone to immense trouble in a task that not everyone would find rewarding, and has restored the credit and respect that are his subject's due.

Stainer was blessed with an unusually warm and generous nature, which allowed him to prevail over opposition and introduce much-needed reforms at St Paul's Cathedral, where he was organist from 1872 to 1888, and at Oxford, where he was Professor of Music from 1889 to 1899. His activities in these posts deserve the thorough accounting that Mr Charlton has given them; nor has his work as HM Inspector of Music in Training Colleges been neglected. In this part of his book Charlton has been resourceful and meticulous in his use of sources, though he is sometimes uncritical in accepting at face value the favourable judgments of Stainer's friends, colleagues and protégés.

Stainer modestly disclaimed greatness as a composer, and Charlton wisely takes him at his word. It is unlikely that *The Daughter of Jairus*, *St Mary Magdalen*, or the cathedral services will ever be revived except occasionally as a historical curiosity, and nothing of great moment will be found in Charlton's descriptions of them. Stainer's lasting work was on a small scale. Several fine hymn-tunes and chants have survived in the teeth of a century of denigration, and so has the "Sevenfold Amen"; in *The Crucifixion*, the one longer work that is still current, hymn-tunes are the salient feature. Perhaps more might have been done to analyse and explain the success of Stainer's tunes, for there is surely a touch of greatness in "Love Divine", or in the double chant in E minor praised by the late Erik Routley.

Two other aspects of Stainer's work receive rather inadequate treatment. His *Theory of Harmony* (1871) was by no means the run-of-the-mill textbook one might suppose from the paragraph it gets on page 156. It boldly ventured into new territory by abandoning the overtone series as the basis of harmony, and replacing it with an original theory based on two successions of thirds erected on the tonic, one major, the other minor. Nor has Charlton quite realized the stature of Stainer's achievement as a musicologist, which has won a good deal better than his compositions. It was no mean feat, in the 1890s, to transcribe quantities of fifteenth-century music, in the absence of any accepted methods or models, and when the musical style of that period was little known or understood. His two great collections are still widely recognized by musicologists as classics of their kind.

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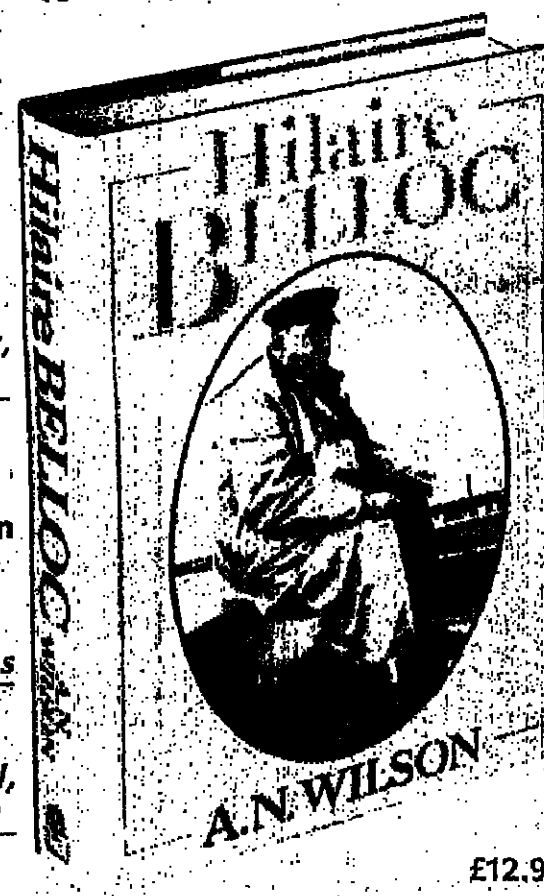
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Transparently untextual

Terence Hawkes

A.D. NUTTALL

A New Mimesis: Shakespeare and the representation of reality
209pp. Methuen. £12.95. (paperback, £6.95). 0416317804

A. D. Nuttall is much possessed by reality. He is even prepared to list some of its intimate indications: that "catch at the heart when we look at a Vermeer painting of a brick wall"; a "tightening at the back of the throat" produced by a sonnet of Shakespeare's; the "real shiver of Truth" generated by some lines in *Henry IV Part 1*. His book itself, he tells us, has been "growing" in his mind "with a sort of slow violence" for the past twenty years. Symptoms of that order must of course evoke sympathy, although a matching list of spasms from a reviewer would perhaps prove unhelpful. Let a report of unwrapping withers suffice.

Professor Nuttall's protracted mental confinement promises a luster of offspring, in any case, than the tetchy hostility towards Structuralists and Post-Structuralists on offer here. Their doctrine of *verum factum*, truth as something we construct in language, robs us, in his view, of the real. And so the first half of this oddly articulated volume undertakes a pernickily harrowing of recent apologetics in the name of an objective reality whose nature is neither reducible to nor exhausted by the ways in which our language refers to it. Provided we recognize that our relationship with the real may be direct (involving factual truth) or indirect (involving probability) and that literature characteristically involves the second not the first, mediated truth to probabilities rather than immediate truth to specific facts, then the principle of "truth to life" as a factor in our response to literature can be resurrected as a kind of abandoned gold standard.

This "realist" position underwrites what Nuttall terms a "transparent" mode of criticism which, unlike its "opaque" opposite, enters the literary work and assesses the veracity of its relation to the real world. On the basis of this calculus, *King Lear* "pierces" by the truth of "the parent-child-ness of it all"; Falstaff can be seen "as a human being"; "attentiveness to the world" ranks in Shakespeare as equal with the deployment of motif and image.

But whose world? What manner of "human being"? In what context does "it all" take place? Nuttall's failure to engage fully with these issues arises from his misconception of the position he opposes. The "structuralist" assumption is not that there is no "real world" beyond language. It is that the real can only be grasped, perceived and made meaningful by means of the punctuating, dividing, categorizing, differentiating activity of language. Language is not a transparent medium and gives no access to any reality "beyond" it in any direct, objective or immediate fashion. As John Searle puts it, language determines what counts as reality. Consequently, the indirect relationship to the real that Nuttall describes cannot be confined to the literary use of language. It is the way all language always works: constructing reality like a text, open to competing readings. As a result, fundamental concepts that surely go to determine the conditions of our concrete social existence such as "freedom", "peace", "democracy", "human being", "man", "woman", even "parent" and "child" offer nothing objective, settled or simply given. They stand, the world knows, as sites of notoriously bitter struggles: the kinds of strife which, since they dispute meaning, can be called "textual" in the broadest sense.

The second half of Nuttall's book concentrates on Shakespeare: an area where the difference between these viewpoints comes sharply into focus. The "textualist" stance sees "Shakespeare" as a set of texts with a crucial role in English-speaking culture, able to be drawn upon to support numbers of political and economic positions, and thus an important arena in which alternative readings will always compete. Nuttall's "realist" position loftily denies its own engagement in that competition. It presents Shakespeare as self-evidently a highly endowed human being and "fellow intelligence". The absence of uniformity or coherence that textualism recognizes as characteristic of all texts, and thus as licensing the com-

petition for their meaning, is duly recognized by Nuttall as the "fundamental indolence of all Shakespeare's writing". But his realism conspires to personalize and so reduce that feature to a dimension of the author's own quirky character, "forever popping up at one's elbow with suggestions and insights" like some grudgingly winsome vicar.

A breezy confidence in the immediacy of one's own access to the real will of course pay little heed to the constraints determining the role assigned to art, literature and particularly to Shakespeare, in our society. Nuttall's readiness to speak for us all – the catch affects "the" heart when "we" look at a Vermeer painting – is but one irritating aspect of a larger programme which aims to efface all such pressures. The claim that certain crucial scenes in *Henry IV Part 2* have "a glaringly obvious, single, clarifying source in reality itself" is another. Its casual deflection, in that "reality itself", of the modifications of history and politics, let alone language, marks a significant error.

Indeed, history proves a major casualty of Nuttall's thesis, despite sporadic claims to the contrary. Shakespeare, we learn, "was looking very hard at the same world (400 years younger, but still the same world) that we are looking at now". That staggering parenthesis (to say nothing of its metaphor) simply drains history away. In its place there coys stands an eternal nature, inhabited by timeless human beings.

When a transcendent nature, the "same world", or an unchanging human nature, the "fellow intelligence", replaces the concrete process of change that history seeks to describe and understand, then the way certainly opens for a "new" mimesis which "we" will be pressed to find appropriate to "our experience": a "new theory" whose essence lies in "the reconciliation of form with veridical or probable representation". That this softens truth to truth-telling, permits the real to dwindle to the probable, should not prevent us from recognizing that it also subjects form to the demands of a veracity whose credentials remain unquestioned and unexplained. The genteel authoritarianism involved might rank as an appropriate confection for an age in which a return to Victorian values has been urged. In critical terms it is Bradley and Walter.

And so to the proof of the pudding. What revelations does the new theory present? Of Coriolanus that "if any of us were to meet him on a battle field the patronizing critical smile would be wiped away very quickly". Of Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice* that perhaps he is swept by a homosexual passion for Bassanio. Of *King Lear* that Shakespeare's personal memory "of cruel village boys tormenting insects" informs it. That Iago is "the man who knows the ropes, the sort of man who is always around in the bar, the 'good chap'...". That Falstaff "is an aged hippy". The novelty of these worldly *aperçus* might be debated. The extent to which they nervously reduce or contentiously threaten fruitfully to erupt in those texts must be a matter to detain even the converted. But certainly none represents what Nuttall wants it to represent: an unmediated depiction of the probable truth.

For how, finally, can we tell the truth from the mediating commentary that construes it? Nature, even human nature, offers no clue. From 1918, when the professor of English at Oxford decided that Caliban constituted a veridical representation of the German race and called him Fritz, down to 1982 when another professor of English claimed that the Falklands campaign could be justified in the light of the probabilities manifest in Crammer's prophetic speech in *Henry VIII*, Shakespeare's plays in our century have proved as susceptible to ideological processing as all texts characteristically must be. For that is what they are: texts. There is no essential "Shakespeare" beyond them, and beyond our processing of them, to which we can gratefully turn. Reality? Our critics will construe that for us. It is what they are for. And that, since Professor Nuttall speaks of catches, remains the real one.

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The first 507

R. V. Holdsworth

J. W. SAUNDERS

A Biographical Dictionary of Renaissance Poets and Dramatists, 1520-1650
216pp. Brighton: Harvester. £30. 0389 20271 1

J. W. Saunders states in his preface that his dictionary brings together all the English poets and dramatists whose major work was produced between 1520 and 1650, omitting only those who wrote in Gaelic (and, presumably, other foreign languages). They amount to 507. "The 507 writers included are comprehensive. No known writer, no matter how obscure, is excluded." This, a little checking rapidly reveals, is a preposterous claim. Even restricting the count to poets and dramatists whose work is extant, and Saunders includes some – but by no means all – whose work is not, and restricting it further by excluding prose writers and the great, who might qualify because of the odd poem or play (for example Bacon, Browne, Burton, Elizabeth, Essex, James, and Henrietta Maria), there are at least fifty-seven writers, beginning with William Alabaster and ending with Richard Zouche, who should figure in this dictionary and do not. Nor are all the names irretrievably obscure. Henry and Thomas Kilgrew are not here, nor are George Clifford, Kenelm Digby, Richard Fanshawe, William Hemming, James Mabbe, John Mason, Walter Montague, John Pickering, John Roe, George Ruggle, Robert Sidney, George Wapull, or George Wilde. Some of the inclusions are equally odd. Richard Vennar gets in, although he was a con-man who specialized in charging admission for plays which did not exist and fleeing with the proceeds, and there is a long entry on Philip Henslowe, but no mention of any writing besides the diary.

These failures are part of a larger carelessness which afflicts this dictionary on every level. It is often unclear whether works cited are lost or extant, whether they are plays or poems (as with Murray's *The Tragical Death of Sophonisba*), and whether the dates given are those of composition or publication. Most of the entries suggest a hasty skimming of the *DNB*, with no attempt to check its assertions against later authorities, such as Chambers, Bentley, or Harbage. Constant outdatedness results. One is regaled with long-discredited beliefs and speculations, here advanced as facts. Browne wrote plays "with Jonson's son Benjamin"; Greene collaborated in *Henry VI*; Heywood was "probably a Fellow of Peterhouse"; Kyd wrote the original *Taming of the Shrew*, "adapted later by Shakespeare"; the texts of Marlowe's plays are all "expurgated versions"; Massinger as well as Fletcher collaborated in *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*; Samuel Rowley was the brother of William; Tourneur collaborated in *The Knight of Malta*, here dated "c. 1611"; and Wilkins in *Timon of Athens*. On the other hand, Saunders is sufficiently in touch to announce that A. L. Rowse has identified the Dark Lady as Emilia Lanier.

Saunders's dates of birth and death, such as those for Campton, Carlell, Munday, Nabbes, and Peele, are often ones now known to be wrong, and his occasional forays into literary judgment are either quaint or perfunctory. Jonson is ticked off for being "almost a medieval" and having "less of the Renaissance in him than Shakespeare"; Waller's "love-poetry, though good, was rarely drawn directly from his own experiences"; of Donne's religious ideas we are assured that "there is no evidence that Donne was fundamentally RC, and therefore frustrated by life". Compression produces further peculiarities. We learn of Sir Francis Bryan that "he was even willing, his first wife having died, to marry for his patron the Countess of Ormonde", but not what it was about the Countess that made this such an impressively loyal step. Among many eccentricities, the most curious is the running-together of pairs of collaborating dramatists to form a single name by means of a medial *n*, as in "BeaumontPletcher" or "FletcherMassinger". It seems unlikely to catch on.

Reliance on antiquated sources is compounded by the author's own tendency to error. Field's christian name was Nathan not Nathaniel; Redford's, whose *Wit and Science* is

does not "survive in entirety", was John Henry; and Fisher's was not Fisher but, intriguingly, Jasper. Barry's christian name was Lording not Ludowick; he was not an Irish gentleman but the son of a London merchant, and his career as a pirate in America and the Mediterranean is ignored. Another playwriting pirate, Francis Verney, author of *Antipoe* (1604), is left out altogether. Chettle's *Lady Jane* did not "reach print", it is lost, not Cooke's *The City Gallant* and Greene's *Quoique* are not two plays but alternative titles of one. Dekker's *The Witch of Edmonton* was certainly performed in 1621 and printed in 1658. (In the entry on Rowley we are told the play was "printed 1608".) In the entry on Donne, Baker not Walton called Donne "a great visiter of ladies", and Bald's *Life* appears in 1970, not 1972. Gascoigne's *Supposes* is by no means "the first extant English comedy", as more than his *Jocasta* is "the second extant English tragedy", and Greene wrote *George Greene* not *Greene a Greene*. If Matthew Gwinne was born in 1586 he is unlikely to have supervised royal entertainments at Oxford in 1592. Jonson did not just have "RC connections", *Volpone* was published in 1607 not 1605, and the bibliography astonishingly omits the edition of Herford and Simpson and the critical studies of Partridge and Barish. Marston did not write "chiefly for Henslowe and the Lord Admiral's company", and it is absurd to suppose that Nashe's *Isle of Dogs* "had writers imprisoned". William Percy did not write for the Children of Paul's, and the date of his *Necromantes* is 1632, not c. 1602. Samuel Rowley's collaborator, here called a "William Bird", was a well-known actor, and their additions to *Dr Faustus* are not mentioned. Thomas Rawlins, who is at one point called Rawlins, did not "resume dramatic writing" after the Restoration; he became chief engraver of the Royal Mint. *The History of Joseph* is not St Thomas Salisbury's only surviving work. It is not likely that Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* in 1597-8 or *Lear* and *Macbeth* in 1604, and *The Contention* between the Houses of York and Lancaster, which is in itself incorrect, is not an alternative title for all three parts of *Henry VI*. Henry Shirley's *Soldier* is *Maryred not Myrtyr*, and Udall's *Ezekias* was not published in 1564; it is lost, and there is no record of its publication. William Wager is known for the interludes not two, and Thomas Watson, here credited with "tragedies, now lost", is known only for one, *Antigone*, which is extant. There is no evidence that Webster, who is said to "blackwash his characters", collaborated with Tourneur, or that he wrote *The White Devil* "after the success of Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy*". Two of Arthur Wilson's plays and fragments of a third are extant, not "only one", and Yarrington's *Two Lamentable Tragedies* is not lost.

The biggest single casualty of all this blundering is Thomas Middleton, the canon of whose work has been radically and completely revised in the past decade by David Lake and MacDonald Jackson. Middleton, it is now clear, wrote *A Yorkshire Tragedy* and *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*, and at a time when he was supposedly devoted entirely to comedy, he probably collaborated with Shakespeare in *Timon of Athens*; and he was not the author of other plays traditionally attributed to him, such as *Blurt, Master Constable*. All this has passed Saunders by. The Middleton offered here attended Gray's Inn, is the author of the *Spanish Gipsy* (whose heroine Pretious becomes "Reliosa"), and wrote *The Changeling* "c. 1620" and *The Witch* "c. 1626". "Probably his best play" is *A Fair Quarrel*, and *A Game at Chess* "his first success". Most damaging of all, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, a play which it is now possible to attribute to Middleton as unquestionably as one attributes *Hamlet* to Shakespeare, is given to Tourneur with no hint that anyone has ever thought otherwise.

There are one or two flickers of life. It is odd to learn or be reminded that John Taylor, the Water Poet tried to sail to Kent in a brown paper boat; that Suckling invented gibbets; and Herriok had a pet sparrow named Phil. But generally this book is a grim experience. It will do much harm, and libraries, on whose readiness to buy dictionaries the publishers are relying, should be urged to save their money.

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Decline and desolation

Pat Rogers

WILLIAM COWPER

The Letters and Prose Writings: Volume Four, Letters 1792-1799
Edited by James King and Charles Ryskamp
498pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £48. 0198126816

Declining years do not have to mean diminished powers or loss of artistic nerve, but in Cowper's case they did. His friend Unwin had died and his relations with John Newton had become strained. Late in 1791 Mrs Unwin suffered her first cerebral haemorrhage, with a second massive attack the following May: she was incapacitated for life. Cowper had embarked on an edition of Milton for Joseph Johnson, as an adjunct to the "Milton Gallery" which Fuseli had devised as a rival for Alderman Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery. This was a millstone round the poet's neck, and he was glad to abandon it in 1793 when the war was

seen to leave "the world no leisure for literary amusements". He turned instead to revising his version of Homer. Few of his creative urges survived as depression grew on him: the verses to his old schoolfellow Warren Hastings are startlingly inept, and even the letters take on a weary aspect, with only the odd hint of his former benignity and humour.

The place in his life earlier occupied by Newton and Unwin, as seen in the first three volumes of this splendid edition (reviewed in the *TLS*, April 8, 1983), now falls to the share of William Hayley. Cowper exchanges notes on Milton with his new friend, and presently goes down to visit him in Sussex (Blake was not yet living in the neighbourhood, so an interesting encounter was narrowly averted). It was the longest journey Cowper had attempted since he moved to Olney a quarter of a century ago. He started out with "a thousand fears" of "terrors by the way". When he got there, he was "a little daunted by the tremendous height of the Sussex hills in com-

parison with which all that I have seen elsewhere are dwarfs" – evidently mountain gloom and mountain glory had not spread to the Home Counties in 1792. After a month he found the view from every window one of "woods like forests and hills like mountains, a wildness in short that rather increases my natural melancholy". So back he went to Bedfordshire: but nothing could attenuate the melancholy now.

The letters provide a day-by-day chronicle of a life led chiefly among the elderly. Naturally medical matters are prominent. It became one of Cowper's tasks to "electrify" Mrs Unwin, that is to use Hayley's hand-operated revolving cylinder as part of a course of electrotherapy. The patient also takes Steers's opodeldoc for her vaguely rheumatic symptoms, and seeks a trustworthy laxative. Cowper himself submits to regular doses of James's powder – with his lack of curiosity about the outside world, he cannot have heard all the tales of its fatal effects – and sometimes resorts to laudanum; without it, he could not "endure even to look at Homer". His insomnia continues none the less, depression and feelings of guilt find no remedy, and his anxiety over Mrs Unwin's possible death further oppresses his outcast spirit – "In one moment all may be undone again and I left desolate." Some would have said that Cowper stood most in need of a good wife, but the experience of his married friends would point in the opposite way. In Sussex he had met the novelist Charlotte Smith and the painter Romney: like their host Hayley, both had separated from an unstable partner. Cowper turns from imperfect human consolations and sets his mind on religion, despite the torment inseparable from his faith.

The dates in the title are misleading: over 440 pages are taken up by two years' correspondence, for 1792 and 1793, and after that there is a mere trickle. From the final sojourn of five years in Norfolk, there are only sixteen letters, and only one of those was not included in the last major edition by Thomas Wright.



But it is right that this kind of *adagio lamentoso* should end in a few broken cadences. Cowper describes the move to Norfolk in the words of the prophet, "I have been tossed like a ball into a far country", and the appropriate vehicle for such numbness is not language but silence.

Again the editing is thorough, helpful and unobtrusive. For a second time Richard Brinsley Sheridan is indexed where Cowper's reference to elocutionary skills clearly points to his father Thomas. And I suspect that an allusion to "Mr Equality... that villain without likeness upon earth... permitted to live, and to live a member of their national Council" (February 10, 1793) is not to Robespierre, as suggested here, but to Égalité Orléans, whose imminent fall was eagerly awaited by men and women of Cowper's persuasion in England. But I can find no serious complaint to make. Although the correspondence is now complete, there is a further volume of miscellaneous prose to look forward to.

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348pp. Collins. £10.95.
0002163152

Alma Schindler Mahler Gropius Werfel's proliferation of surnames would justify a biography even if she had been a dull woman. She was the daughter of Emil Schindler, the Austrian landscape-painter. She grew up in Vienna in the 1890s, she was extremely beautiful and very musical and she knew all the outstanding artists and musicians of that extraordinary place and time. Before she married Mahler, when she was twenty-two and he was forty-one, she had been involved with the painter Gustav Klimt, the theatre director Max Burckhardt and the composer Alexander von Zemlinsky (Schoenberg's mentor). Her marriage brought her into close contact with the affairs of the Vienna Opera House and, after Mahler's resignation in 1907, with the eventful politics of the New York Met. Mahler's Eighth Symphony was dedicated to her. She knew all his protégés and admirers, among them the designer Alfred Roller, who collaborated with Mahler on the famous *Tristan* production of 1903. Schoenberg, whose *Pierrot Lunaire* was given two performances on one night in Alma's music-room, Gustave Charpentier and Caruso. She was to become a close friend of Alban Berg, who dedicated *Wozzeck* to her, and his Violin Concerto to the memory of her daughter Manon. While still married to Mahler she was pursued by the young architect Walter Gropius; after Mahler's death in 1911 she had an intense affair with Oskar Kokoschka - who painted her often, most notably in "Die Windsbraut" (The Tempest) - but married Gropius in 1915. The marriage failed: Gropius went to Germany to found the Bauhaus, and Alma left him for the writer Franz Werfel, whom she married when she was fifty and he was thirty-nine. In 1939 Alma and Franz fled into exile, crossing the border from France to Spain with Alma's manuscript of Bruckner's Third Symphony (which Hitler had wanted to buy) hidden in her bag. In California, the Werfels were part of that famous group of European exiles in Hollywood - the Manns, the Schoenbergs, the Korngolds and many others - whose response to America might be summed up in words quoted by Alma: "Grateful but unhappy". After Franz's death Alma lived in New York, a lonely old woman who died in 1964 at the age of eighty-five.

"You are the Woman, and I am the Artist!" Kokoschka said to her. Alma accepted the distinction: she wrote in her diaries (in a passage which gives a fair example of her prose style), "This man and ever again this man in my life! I need the crazy mystique of the artist, and from this I also manage to fill my own head." But the role of "muse to genius" was not a recipe for self-fulfilment. The most sensational document, in a biography full of sensation, is the letter Mahler wrote to Alma before their marriage, insisting that she give up her "personality", her composing and her ideas, in order to dedicate herself to him. The letter starts off rhapsodic ("That which you are to me, Alma, that which you could perhaps be or become - the dearest and most sublime object of my life, the loyal and courageous companion who understands and prompts me... my peace, my heaven in which I can constantly immerse myself... in a word, my wife") but soon gets ratty ("How do you picture the married life of a husband and wife who are both composers? Have you any idea how ridiculous...?"). Kokoschka, ten years later, made the same demands: "I want you very much when you find your own being, your peace and your freedom in my existence." As Mahler's wife Alma did, indeed, make the concessions required by genius, but the marriage did not make her very happy. It was only in the year or so before his death that Mahler (fired by the rivalry of Walter Gropius) seems to have fallen in love with Alma as intensely as at first. After his death she complained of his neglect but idolized his memory.

She never dedicated herself in the same way again, but the pursuit of genius continued to bring her considerable suffering. Alma had three children who died young, and the making



Ercole Dret's "Le amiche" will be offered for sale by Christie's, Roma (Palazzo Massimo Lancellotti, Piazza Navona 114, Rome) on May 22.

and breaking of her relationships was dramatic and painful, for all that, as her dying daughter told her, "You'll get over it, Mum, as you get over everything." The personal drama was overtaken by history: the most disturbing part of the biography is Alma's ambivalence about Jewishness ("She could live neither with Jews nor without them"), her romantic adulation of Hitler and Mussolini and her refusal to leave Vienna until it was almost too late. In her eagerness for experience and her political naïveté, Alma seems at times almost absurd. Kokoschka once bought a life-sized doll made to look like Alma, and showed it off at a drunken party. "In the morning the police appeared at the door, investigating a report that a headless body had been seen in the garden." This bizarre episode, on which the biography passes no comment, seems alarmingly apt: Alma Schindler, collector of famous "heads", becomes herself a headless doll.

The effect of headlessness, however, may owe something to the style of Karen Monson's

biography. The trouble with this material is that it is too interesting: to tell it well requires not only a feeling for character but an ability to control a mass of complex historical and cultural stuff. As it is, the book is dotted with globs of information about Vienna circa 1890-1939: bits about Klimt and the Secessionists, or Mahler at the Opera House, or Kokoschka's stage plays, with little sense of why such music and painting and writing was all happening there and then, or of what connections there were between them. Instead we're given the Jennifer's Diary of German Expressionism, rapid, blithe and superficial.

The reasons aren't far to seek. Though Monson expresses wariness of Alma Mahler's unreliable autobiographies and reminiscences of Mahler, she has in fact leaned on them very heavily. Alma sees her father in his coffin: "He had always seemed so large and grand in her eyes. Suddenly he looked small and fragile." Alma's autobiography (repelling titled *And The Bridge Is Love*) reads: "I was astonished

only by the smallness of this man who had been my father." Manon Gropius is born: "From the moment of her birth, everyone who came in contact with her fell in love with her" (Alma son). "I fell in love with this creature... she was a fairy-tale being; nobody could see her without loving her" (Alma). Alma falls in love with Werfel at a concert: "They could not keep from staring at one another... They were a communion and went to her apartment" (Monson). "My eyes did not leave Werfel's in the intermission he came to my box; we were home together" (Alma). This is the first sight of the legendary Mahler - Roller *Tristan*, as told by Monson:

At the first performance... Gustav was exhausted and during intermission he lay on the sofa in his private room and wished to give up and go away from all the problems of his position. Standing over him with Alma, Just (Mahler's sister) commented, "One thing delights me - I had his youth, you have his old."

Alma next has a page about her dislike of the jealous Justine, before she turns to a new subject - Mahler's friendship with Charpentier.

Monson's clumsy revising of this scene makes it at once dull, flat and rushed. The prose is wretched, as everywhere. Alma always "converses", she never talks; we learn that she was "at loose ends" in America and that Gropius was "living under primitive circumstances"; that "Some of the obstacles from their past no longer appeared to be confronting them", or that "This episode had lasting effects on all of them, tolling their memories like an omen of doom." But it's not just that Monson seems to be writing with two left feet. The "legend" has been too much for her. Famous women with dramatic sex-lives do seem dangerous to their biographers - Jeffrey Meyers's *Katherine Mansfield*, Nancy Cardozo's *Maud Gonne* and Joan Givner's *Katherine Anne Porter* are over-emotional examples of the genre. Alma Mahler's siren-like qualities persist after death: this biography is wreckage strewn on her rock.

Zealanders and Australians who mobbed them. One or two quarrels between the couple are recollected (nothing especially grisly): a look of fatigue here, a flirtatious glance there. But most of all we are made wearisomely aware of the endless social round: speeches, surly press receptions and ill-equipped theatres. Enough to make any couple scream and throw things.

This is not a book to be read for its style: "Sydney is a lovely place explained Redington, summing up how he and the others had had a free and easy time there." But theatrical gossip might make up for such vapidity. Elsie Beyer, the manager, was considered too bossy. "We have our labour troubles at home, but we are not bound hand and foot by labour as they are here," she complained in a letter home. In Perth, *The School for Scandal* was the first show to be staged in the theatre for ten years. The audience were on their "best behaviour" and kept carefully silent throughout, which appalled the actors, used to response. Olivier wrote, "A great deal of the ineptitude that was complained of is on account of their having forgotten how to listen." He described his reception in Melbourne as "pleasant and nervous" and as "smug at first. There's a great feeling of tense, humourless fear that one is getting at them all the time. It makes it all rather a strain, to say the least."

But by the time they got to Melbourne they were feeling rather jaded. In Sydney at a ball in aid of Food for Britain, "the people just stood on the tables and stared at them." They were,

all drunk, except the Governor.) And Brisbane grew huffy because they performed only one of the plays in their repertoire. No Richard III. "We're Shakespeares-starved here," they explained.

Before departure, Olivier had an operation on his troublesome leg and had to be hoisted aboard the Corinthia. "They lowered him outside his cabin door. Here Vivien waited for him and he greeted her with a 'Good Morning, Viv.' Perhaps fans can stomach this kind of pap. The blurb promises: 'Through a year in the life of the Oliviers' marriage we can see how this legendary marriage foundered.' But we can't. It is not particularly revealing to suddenly write in the middle of descriptions of performances, excursions and troubles with the Old Vic hierarchy in London: 'He now seemed to have abandoned, in any conventional sense the desire to be happy with her.' Pastiche was what had drawn them together and, as O'Connor observes, 'Jeu is not Jéu! If she loved her fugitive strangeness.' There was perhaps no way that marriage could ultimately prosper between them. The endless propinquity and pedestrian problems of the tour can't have helped.

But its success was spectacular: a post-war comet of glamour and talent that swept a starved land. Almost my first memory is of my father taking me to *The Skin of Our Teeth* in Sydney. I can still see Vivien Leigh, port and skinnier, dressed as the maid, I can still see my father in his rusty old dinner-jacket, looking me to make a noise.

Dressing up

Anne Scott-James

HARDY AMIES
Still Here: An autobiography
195pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £10.95.
0297782762

Hardy Amies's autobiography, *Still Here*, tells the bare facts of his life in chronological order: within its limitations it is engaging and informative, the story of the rise of a middle-class boy to a pinnacle in the world of international dressmaking. He was born in London in 1909, his father being an employee of the LCC, his mother a saleswoman at a court dressmaker's, so that dressmaking was in the blood. When he was a small boy she sometimes took him to the salon on a Saturday morning, where the staff made a fuss of him and gave him pieces of material to play with. Later, when the family moved to Essex, he shone at school at acting and making costumes. He failed to get to Cambridge as his family had hoped, but went instead to a humble job in France, and then to another in Germany, and learnt to speak both languages fluently. Throughout his life, Hardy Amies has seized every opportunity to learn - languages, dress designing, salesmanship, the techniques of war, and, finally, from the sophisticated friends of later years, "how to arrange rooms... what to eat and how to prepare it... how a gentleman should dress and where he should order his clothes." The writer, Yvonne French, extended his range of reading and John Fowler changed his taste in flowers.

Amies's first congenial job came in 1934, when he became designer to the couture tailor-

ing house of Lachasse, but industry and application took him quickly up the ladder. Soon after the war he borrowed money from friends and opened his own house in Savile Row, travelled with his collection to the United States and Canada, and made business deals which later extended all over the world. In 1950, he made clothes for Princess Elizabeth's state visit to Canada, and he is now one of the Queen's three dressmakers, a holder of the Royal Warrant. In 1959 he signed a contract with Hepworth, the men's outfitters, the start of an international business in men's clothes, especially ties, which has outstripped the women's section as a money-spinner. Even during the war, he designed clothes in every spare minute, though his war record (about which he is modest) was impeccable. He joined the SOE, putting up pip after pip on his epaulettes until he was made head of the Belgian Section and a Lieutenant-Colonel. He volunteered for parachute jumping and was awarded a Belgian decoration.

Most of *Still Here* is an honest, factual record of his career, with no whitewashing of the financial setbacks which attend the pioneer who tries to build up a business from scratch in Britain's inclement commercial climate. But there is a chapter at the end archly called *Moi*, (why not *Myself*?) which purports to tell us of Hardy Amies, the man. He gives us his vital statistics (40-33, well-shaped straight legs and feet with high arches), tells that he is a born bachelor but enjoys family life, and discusses his friends and artistic tastes, but it is curiously flat. Either Hardy Amies lacks deep feelings, or he does not care to write about them.

Baroness's boy

Ruth Harris

THORKILD BJØRNVIG
The Pact: My friendship with Isak Dinesen
Translated by Ingvar Schousboe and William Jay Smith
169pp. Louisiana State University Press.
£7.95.
0285 649981

In the winter of 1948 Baroness Blixen invited Thakile Bjørnvig to a small dinner party at Rungstedlund, her country house in Denmark. She was already known as a brilliantly successful writer under her own name as well as under the pseudonym of Isak Dinesen and he was an obscure poet half her age. They were enchanted by each other and their stormy friendship lasted for five years. Bjørnvig had promised not to write about her during her lifetime and *The Pact*, first published in Denmark ten years ago, is his first comment on this friendship. The "pact" in question was an assertion that Karen Blixen and Bjørnvig should have "a mutual and perfect trust in each other" for the duration of their lives, but the poet soon began to realize that it was not an agreement between equals. Blixen calmly put herself into God's place when she felt it necessary, even substituting the word "I" for "God" in a quotation from the psalms and signing it with her name. She forced Bjørnvig to annul his marriage and when he fell deeply in love with a young married woman she interfered. In the end the poet wrote and asked for the freedom to be himself. "Once I thought I should

Queen of tarts

Anthony Levi

ROGER DUCHÊNE
Ninon de Lenclos: La courtisane du Grand Siècle
316pp. Paris: Fayard. 85fr.
2213013659

This book is quintessentially French in its mixture of wit, formal propriety, erudition, biographical interest and eroticism. It is a spin-off from Roger Duchêne's magnificent three-volume edition of Mme de Sévigné's letters for the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, an edition which has already been followed by a book on Pascal, and is about to be followed by another on Mme de Lafayette.

Ninon de Lenclos was a very successful high-class tart, "aimée pendant plus de soixante ans des plus grands seigneurs de la cour", and her life, adventures and bedroom techniques are all treated here with flawless taste, discretion and decent curiosity. Duchêne writes relaxedly and treats his seriously interesting as well as seriously amusing subject in a way appropriate for anyone interested in the *grand siècle*, although this book of higher, light relief, by an academic author recovering from the formidable task of annotating in minute historical detail three Sévigné volumes, raises the burning question of whether literary criticism is on the way to being amalgamated with solid history, under the huge influence of the *Annales* school of historians.

A lot of bottle

Caroline Moorehead

ROSIE BOYCOTT
A Nice Girl Like Me: A story of the seventies
250pp. Chatto and Windus/Hogarth Press.
£8.95.
07011 26655

"I thought", a friend once said to Rosie Boycott, "you were the girl who'd got the seventies beat." In one sense, of course, the friend was right: in less than ten years Rosie Boycott started the feminist periodical *Spare Rib*, wrote a lot of good journalism, travelled Asia in search of gurus, spent several weeks in a Thai prison and edited a women's magazine in Kuwait. But at some cost: in the process she became an alcoholic. *A Nice Girl Like Me* is her account of how the process started and how she finally ended it.

In March 1972, on her twenty-first birthday, Boycott, second daughter of a soldier and former pupil of Cheltenham Ladies' College, founded *Spare Rib* with Marsha Rowe in two rooms off Carnaby Street. The paper's name came from Claud Cockburn, the money from friends and the filing cabinets from *Ink*, which had just gone bankrupt. It was a good moment. The underground press was dying; the women's movement just beginning. "At the start of the seventies", writes Boycott, "if you had talent, style and a sense of the extreme - then barriers could be broken. If you were young - and especially if you were female - then the sky was the limit."

And for a while it was. *Spare Rib* prospered: the publishing house, Virago, was born. Then something went wrong: from occasional soft drug-taking, Boycott moved to heroin; not long after that, to drink. First she drank to lighten the fun, later to fill the time, in the end to live; day-long binges became weekend benders and misplaced weeks. In 1981 she voluntarily entered the Charter Clinic in London and over the following months weaned

herself completely from drink: a considerable, and lonely undertaking.

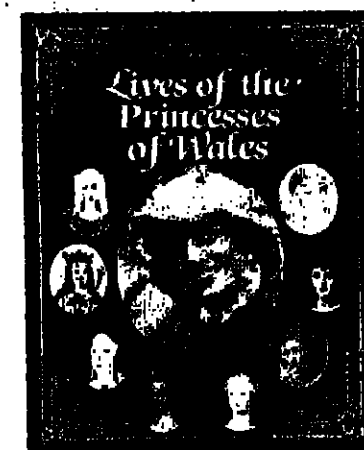
Boycott seems not only to have been talented and to have possessed the style of the 1970s: she was also energetic and tough. While other girls worked as secretaries and complained about the unfairness of being female, she got an editorial job on an underground magazine; while others had abortions, she went to the gynaecologist the morning after she lost her virginity. The seeds of recovery were there all along, in the indifference to the pack, the strong opinions, the idea that it was important to have a good time and feel no guilt: it is not surprising that Boycott survived.

A Nice Girl Like Me is composed of alternating chapters, "I" in the clinic, "Rosie" in the earlier narrative, converging ultimately on the present. Such tricks of style are often irritating, but here they provide pace. The tone is confessional, self-revelatory, if sometimes a little humourous: there are many incidents, people and parties. "By May of 1978, when she was twenty-seven, Rosie was going out with five different people. Two Arabs, one Corsican and two Englishmen. She was exhausted." The reader, too, is exhausted. There is little room for friends, for children, for other women or even for work. What distinguishes *A Nice Girl Like Me* is not the reminiscences of the frenetic 1970s but the bald, factual account of her alcoholism. There are few corners of the disease that Rosie Boycott does not explore. And there is something both fascinating and admirable in the resolve to commit it to paper, with all possible honesty.

Natalia Ginzburg's *Family Sayings*, revised from the original translation by D. M. Low, is re-issued by Carcanet (181pp. £7.95. 0 85635 504 6). When first published in 1967, the TLS reviewer wrote that "it seems to give biography a new dimension, new possibilities, and the tired old form of the family chronicle an aspect that is entirely new."

LIVES OF THE PRINCESSES OF WALES

by Fryer, Bousfield, Toffoli

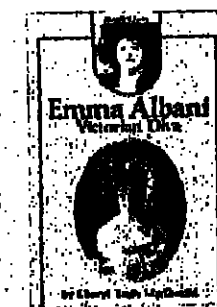


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American notes

Christopher Hitchens

Last autumn ("American notes", September 23) I wrote about the symposium *Our Country and Our Culture*, sponsored and published by the Committee for the Free World. I suggested that it had appropriated its title, but little else by way of depth or *élan*, from the *Parisian Review* symposium of the same name published in 1952. The distinctive thing about the Committee for the Free World, on a close reading, seemed to be its virulent dislike and suspicion of modern American fiction. Robert Coover, Robert Stone, E. L. Doctorow, Joseph Heller, John Updike and others were all denounced for being, in different ways, anti-American. Yet the Committee's interest in and commitment to modern American fiction were exemplified by the presence of Saul Bellow on its board.

The following month, the CFW's newsletter, *Contentions*, gave itself over to the publication of a bouquet of book reviews. The nine separate notices formed a unity, because all the volumes mentioned had won important awards in the course of the year, and the reviews had as their stated intention a critique of "the publishers, editors, reviewers, authors, booksellers, librarians, and others who have been called upon to represent the literary establishment of which they are a part". In the view of CFW, the annual allocation of prizes "speaks volumes about the current condition of our culture and the values that govern it".

As a result of this highly polemical and bitter edition, the committee has forfeited Saul Bellow's membership. "They gave all these editorial opinions about books, and my name was on their masthead. It looked as though I had a part in their opinions. So I wrote to Midge Decter and told her I was through with it. . . . I'll want to make enemies I'll do it on my own. I mean, who are they to drag me into abuse of other people - Gore Vidal for instance?" Vidal's book, *The Second American Revolution and other essays*, had caught the eye of Midge Decter, CFW's director, in a big way. She wrote of its "two main conventions - a deep loathing for American society and a faith in the aesthetic superiority of homosexuality". Having correctly declared her personal interest - Vidal has written with lofty contempt of her own work - Ms Decter described his collection as "an often successful effort at wit and intelligence and ending now (the fashion today) with a kind of snooty, mindless and altogether conventional attitudinising".

Bellow says that he "particularly disagreed" with this vituperation. Ms Decter is unapologetic, saying that the politicization of culture is now so far advanced that there is no choice but to engage with it in polemical terms. Actually, if she and her colleagues had concentrated their fire more precisely on the literary prize racket, they would have deserved every sympathy. One does not have to be a neo-Leavisite to object to the self-congratulatory administration of the Pulitzer Award, for example, or to a lesser extent, that of the American Book Association. The National Book Critics' Circle, dilapidated though it may sound, conducts itself more scrupulously, and is less brazenly commercial. The vials of Decter's wrath are therefore emptied over it. "How could the NBCC have failed to respond to so compelling a reflection of the way we are nowadays bidden to think and feel?" Bidden? Yes. On she goes: Vidal's writing, and its reception, reflect the "smugly right-thinking" and "the old familiar liturgy". Apparently, from the vantage of the CFW, the landscape of the United States presents itself as a huge swamp of sickly self-doubt, amounting almost to self-abdication and suicide, and tainted with enervated sexuality. I can readily imagine their plying sneers as they read me saying that it just doesn't feel like that.

The Free Worlders are generally tougher and more rapacious than their predecessors in the Congress for Cultural Freedom. They often have resorted to the term "dependent". They regard themselves as lonely, reviled and embattled when, in point of fact, their opinions are often officially sanctioned and lavishly sponsored. When discussing the cultural ruthlessness of the totalitarian enemy, the Zhdanov mentality which interprets all dissent as a

symptom of rot and decay, they occasionally betray a very slight tinge of repressed vicarious approval. Bellow is perhaps right when he snorts, "Oh well, why should I look for honourable standards in the literary world now? They haven't been there for a long time." Or perhaps Joseph was correct in *Dangling Man*, when he observed that "most serious things are closed to the hard-boiled".

* * *

Somewhere in *Humboldt's Gift*, the narrator refers to "the mental rabble of the wised-up world". This came back to me forcefully when I read the report on American reading habits by the somehow discouragingly named Book Industry Study Group. The report finds that only 56 per cent of Americans over sixteen read books of any sort; and a "book reader" is generously defined as a person who has read at least part of a book in a six-month period. The definition of "book" stretches itself to comprehend volumes of cat cartoons and manuals about exercise and self-improvement.

In the sixteen to twenty-one age bracket, "book reading" even of this exiguous kind has declined from 75 to 63 per cent in the last five years, and to 39 per cent in the case of Americans over sixty. The director of the Book Industry Study Group reports that the commonest response encountered during the survey was "books are boring". That is to say that, even among the declining total of the functionally literate, the ability to read for pleasure - let alone for enlightenment - is being eroded.

BISG was surveying the propensity to read rather than literacy itself, but the slump in reading cannot be unrelated to the awful statistics on the ability to read. There are 26 million adult illiterates in the United States. In the city of Washington, where I live, the proportion is one in five - a finding which would disgrace the capital city of many poorer nations to the south. As a volunteer in the local literacy programme, I recently learned that the numbers show no sign of diminishing. Our scheme is not available to illiterates under a certain age, because the school system is supposed to cope. But it is plain that the schools are graduating thousands of analphabetic students each year. Many of them are obviously not stupid. It takes cunning and ingenuity to conceal illiteracy into adulthood and to fool employers, bureaucrats and fellow-workers (if any). One young man asked for help simply to write his name - he didn't want to become literate but he did want to be able to open a bank account. Those who are really concerned for the fate of the culture might expend more of their concern on this.

The periodicals, 14: *Ambit*

James Lasdun

MARTIN BAX (Editor)

Ambit

A quarterly of poems, short stories, drawings and criticism. 95pp. Available from 17 Priory Gardens, London N6. £2.20 per issue; £8 yearly subscription.

Martin Bax's *Ambit* is a beautifully produced quarterly, with a breezy editorial spirit that continues, after almost twenty-five years, to promote its particular heterodoxy with undiminished zeal. "On all levels, poetry in this country almost entirely ignores Expressionism and Surrealism," writes Henry Graham (poetry co-editor) in a recent issue, attempting to account for "the desperate malaise of English poetry". You can be sure the poems that find their way into *Ambit* ignore no such thing. As a result, it must be said, most of them sound anachronistic or plain silly, at least to an ear attuned to the less exalted strains of the mainstream. Graham's own surreal-expressionist "Inner City" is a case in point:

Great God this is an awful place.
Waves of malevolence suck at the stricken senile
metaphorical death picks off anyone not looking
out.

Nevertheless, the overreaching and general excess typical of an *Ambit* poem implies a principle of selection that is perhaps healthier than that of other comparable magazines. Inclusion

catastrophic situation and less on heresy-hunting among novelists.

* * *

The two words "California" and "psychoanalysis" have come, in conjunction, to evoke an instant imagery of ego-massage, bogus consciousness-raising, self-indulgence and costly, manipulative shrinkery. This was not always so. A fascinating new study, *The Repression of Psychoanalysis* by Russell Jacoby (Basic Books), has unearthed the neglected history of the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Study Group, which kept up its deliberations in the late 1930s and 1940s before being dispersed by death and by various kinds of indifference.

The group, which had been driven out of Europe by Nazism, was centred on Otto Fenichel, a brilliant and innovative analyst whose *Rundbriefe*, privately circulated letters sent around the circle of his colleagues, form the core of the book. Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Ernst Simmel were among his associates in Los Angeles, at a time when the expatriate colony there also included Thomas Mann, Franz Werfel and Bertolt Brecht. The choice of the United States was not, in Fenichel's case at least, a hasty one. As he wrote before leaving his first place of exile, Prague, in June, 1938:

Today the prospects for living thought are poor. Reason is challenged by war, and has turned gloomy. Many are oppressed; many are in need; and whoever thinks is threatened. Raw stupidity mixes with reason. . . . What once was is past. However, authentic integrity does not know defeat. When pressed, it hardens, and stands stronger. It can wait. Where there is still truth it will be preserved, even if it must flee far. Sadly, only in America do we find hope.

Not that the transition was without its dislocations. Fenichel visited Topeka, Kansas, where Karl Menninger had set up an enclave for refugee analysts, and brought the house down by discoursing on "penis envy". He disagreed with Adorno, who opposed the group's decision to dedicate its study of anti-Semitism to President Roosevelt. The desire for acceptance and assimilation on the part of these political Freudians was at times pathetically intense: it was not to save some of them from the attentions of Senator McCarthy in later years. But on professional matters they kept their distance, never seeking, for example, the recognition of the American Psychoanalytic Association.

Jacoby believes that the eclipse of Fenichel's group (he died in 1946) and subsequent amnesia, has been our loss. Psychoanalysis has, he says, subsequently "fattened into a quiet trade", "its political and cultural vitality

on grounds of noble intent, as opposed to exclusion on grounds of failure to observe the contemporary proprieties. Given that few poems in any magazine are going to be worth a second glance, the former not only seems likely to produce a more endearing style of mediocrity, but also keeps alive the possibility that something spectacularly original will one day be trawled in.

Where this principle does, to some extent, pay off, is in the prose, which is seldom less than interesting, and sometimes truly inspired. This is no doubt due in large part to the presence, on the editorial panel, of J. G. Ballard. Under his aegis, *Ambit*'s prose pages have attracted contributions from eminent fantasists and "experimental" writers such as William Burroughs and Aidan Higgins, and have also been conscientiously nurturing newer offbeat talents, such as Jim Mangnell, J. New and Deborah Levy. Whether these writers will come to anything remains to be seen, but one feels their experiments are performed in good faith. The avant-garde is a notorious refuge for charlatans, which makes it doubly difficult for the genuine to find reputable outlets. *Ambit* is one, and this is greatly to its credit.

The new "Armageddon" issue is fairly characteristic: some intriguing prose, a good deal of exuberantly bad poetry. Ballard's story of a man waking to find he has the planet entirely to himself sets a cheerfully apocalyptic lobe which continues with cartoon catastrophes drawn by one "R. McEddon". Gavin Swann's exceptionally limp poem "The War

bleached out". Stylistically, too, there has been a sad declension. Whereas "Freud was simply and elegantly for a wide cultural audience, few American analysts have inherited either this capability or urge. In a technical and medical prose, contemporary analysts conspicuously write for one another." As an essayist the retrieval of history, and the restatement of values, Jacoby's book deserved a fate far better than the one it received - which was to be set aside by reviewers in favour of Jeffrey Mason's more sensational work on Freud and the Seduction Theory.

* * *

In Irish bars, and in other places of public resort in New York, it is quite common to see framed poster or tea-towel which attempts to set out the rules of cricket at the expense of "the Brits". Sardonicly phrased, the edicts involve a play on the words "out" and "in": the side that sits on the outside is in, and the team on the pitch is out, and when you're out you go in, and when everybody who's been out, "that's the end of the game". Until recently this was the extent of cricketing lore in the United States. But this spring, Pantheon Books took the risk of republishing C. L. R. James' enthralling memoir, *Beyond a Boundary*. The response has been extraordinary. Pages of views have been given up to analysis of the cricket aesthetic. Learned magazines have been explaining the provenance of W. G. Grace and Ranjitsinhji, and the relation between leg breaks and colonialism in the West Indies. The names of Sir Learie Constantine and Garfield Sobers are heard in the land, and their significance decoded. Best of all is the introduction, "A note on cricket", which the publishers have appended to the New York edition:

Point, cover point, silly point, long-stop, extra cover, mid-off, silly mid-off, short leg, and long leg all refer to specific fielding positions (there are over thirty including the bowler and the wicketkeeper, who functions much like a baseball catcher, with an equally critical and subtle, yet oft unheralded, role). Or, no less charmingly:

Because of the many psychological calculations being made by batsmen, bowlers, and fielders throughout the game, each trying to wear the other down, matches may seem to take a relatively long time to complete.

The whole thing has been very well condensed, in spite of the slight incredulity which does at times shine through it. If nothing else, the renaissance of the book may draw a new generation to James's observations on Theocracy. As he himself puts it - "what do they know of cricket who only cricket know?"

Game" ("We are now talking about a game where they don't get up"), Robert Aron's concrete poem "John Hersey's Hiroshima", in which typographical gimmicks substitute for imagination in an energetic, but failed, attempt to revitalize the clichés of holocaust writing. Even Peter Porter enters the spirit, with "Tych 1498: 1984: 9841", the last section of which is an acrostic chom-chant, written in an invented English of the future: "Endel Nent fir noo. Avize!"

Deborah Levy provides the most entertaining contribution, with "Proletarian Zen", a cocktail of satire, humour and bizarre whimsy, featuring three sisters and a dirty old Zee waiter. It is written in a splendidly sustained pidgin English. To say that this is the only piece that comes near to vindicating *Ambit*'s pop/radical ethos, is not a criticism of the magazine. It is no secret that magazines like this one are principally for the sake of the editors and contributors. One buys them more as a gesture of support for the enterprise, than in any serious expectation of pleasure or enlightenment. A single thoroughly satisfying piece per issue is all one can reasonably hope for, and *Ambit* generally provides it.

Arts Express, May 1984, the third issue of a national magazine for art and arts education, edited by Jonathan Croall and Ken Robinson (66 St John's Road, London SW11 1PT, 75p), subscribers (50p) carries a first London publication, as well as regular editorial, news, features, review articles and listings.

Letters

H.D.

Sir, - In his review of H. D.'s *Collected Poems 1912-1944* (April 27), Gabriel Pearson arrives at what seems to me the quite astonishing verdict that she is "a major figure in the Modernist movement, with an achieved body of work that can stand comparison with that of Eliot, Pound, Stevens and Williams". For the life of me I can't see how he manages to come to that conclusion. (Unless he has a very poor opinion of the other four.) Even if he is right about the poems from which he quotes, H. D. emerges as no more than an interesting minor poet. But, anyway, is he right? He quotes some lines from "The Poet": "No, / I don't pretend, in a way, to understand. . . . I think, / why should he stay there, / why should he guard a shrine so alone, / so apart, / on a path that leads nowhere?" And among the qualities he finds to praise is "an extremely reticent scheme of imagery which plays off tacit gestures against terms implying both motion and arrest (so 'understand' can attach its abstraction to the concrete directness of 'guard')". But "understand" isn't attached to "guard" and anyway the full phrase, "guard a shrine", is so far from "concrete directness" as to be that very different thing, an inert cliché. Of course the cliché could be ironically meant, but try as I will I can see no such implication in H. D.'s use of it. And surely, as the passage as a whole makes clear, all she's doing is uttering a kind of gushing sigh over "Saint Lawrence"?

Professor Pearson also makes much of a passage from another poem which, he claims, blends Greek idiom with "naked and immediate feeling":

I hate you for this,
and now that your fault be less,
I would cry, turn back,
lest she the shameless and radiant
sleay you for neglect.

He links it to some lines about what he calls "the intimate desolations of her married life", in which she writes of how she "fell / back on our couch at night". "Couch", Pearson says, "does duty both as the domestic article and archaic furnishing. The Greek Anthology kisses a Kensington interior." I have no wish to decry the miseries of H. D.'s life with Richard Aldington, who was obviously a very nasty bit of work; but the lines Pearson quotes are guff, aren't they? H. D. invariably used the kind of faded poetic language which her reviewer seems to find so remarkable ("lest", "slay"), but the blend is not so much Greek Anthology and Kensington (bizarre though that conflation would be) as Lord Leighton and Olive Custance. It certainly has nothing to do with major poetry.

JOHN LUCAS,
19 Devonshire Avenue, Beeston, Nottinghamshire.

Poetry Publishing

Sir, - I would like to correct an error made by Mick Imloh in his article "Poetry publishing and publishers" (April 27).

Edith Södergran was not Norwegian but Finnish (and wrote in Swedish). I was delighted by Imloh's complaint that I showed "sheer bloody-mindedness" in deciding to print 1,550 copies of Södergran's *Complete Poems*. The book was published in February, and at the end of March had sold over 500 copies in hardback and paperback, which is not a bad start. It is Bloodaxe's bloody-minded policy that if we are publishing one of Europe's great poets, we not only make sure that the translation is as first-rate as David McDuff's, but we also take on Imloh's "Little England" prejudices and knock them for six when we demonstrate that there is a sizeable readership for such writers in Britain. To do that we have to print enough copies. I hope I shall be no less sanguine when I fix the print run for Miroslav Holub later in the year.

NEIL ASTLEY,
Bloodaxe Books, PO Box 15N, Newcastle upon Tyne.

We regret an error of transmission in Mick Imloh's article as a result of which it was wrongly stated that Bloodaxe Books is funded by Northern Ireland Arts, rather than Northern Arts.

Gobineau Reconsidered

Sir, - Michael Biddiss (Letters, April 13) rebukes me for saying Gobineau was not a racist. My point was simply that it is inappropriate to apply this twentieth-century term, with its connotations of the active pursuit of racial supremacy, to his case. Biddiss cannot have forgotten that the designation of Gobineau as the "father of racist ideology" in the title of his own book on the writer's social and political thought (1970) incurred the disapproval of Jean Gualmier.

On the more general question, I do not deny the central position of the *Essai sur l'Inégalité des races humaines* in Gobineau's intellectual development. Indeed, I had thought that my analysis of individual works, as reflected in the title of my review, laid adequate stress on its theories. The paradox of a man of indisputable talent harbouring "deep contempt for notions of common humanity" was raised by Diderot in *Le Neveu de Rameau* apropos no less a figure than Racine. Professor Biddiss, is, of course, at liberty to find it still challenging. It is permissible to feel that literary analysis, at least, is more fruitfully concerned with other matters.

PETER FAWCETT,
Department of French, University of Leicester.

NSTC and NUC

Sir, - It is understandable that a publisher of such a major compilation as *NUC* should argue (Letters, April 20) that the basis for the next major retrospective bibliographical project should be his own catalogue. Despite the horrors of its format and the notorious illegibility of its spine *NUC* undoubtedly offers the fullest listing of American holdings of nineteenth-century books in the English language.

It is less comprehensible that he should fail to notice that *NSTC* - as spelt out in the review (April 6) by Robin Alston - is a subject and imprint arrangement as well as one by author; features which *NUC* makes no claim to offer; that the recording of the holdings of the British Library, Bodley, Cambridge, the National Library of Scotland, TCD and Newcastle is only the first phase of a comprehensive *NSTC*; and that "substantial enhancement of those [resources] that already exist" is better served by re-cataloguing an existing source.

It is quite incomprehensible that such a publisher should even suggest that John Barrow's *Account of Travels* (much quoted even in university first-year courses in historical geography) is typical of the nineteenth-century holdings of UK deposit libraries - It is absolutely clear in Alston's review that his use of the Barrow example is to show the typical format of an *NSTC* record, rather than a typical entry; or that anyone could consider that the "principal research libraries of the world" are covered by a catalogue, *NUC*, which does not include the British Library and the Bodleian. Research is not restricted to the New World.

F. J. G. ROBINSON,
Nineteenth Century Short Title Catalogue, 20 Great North Road, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Burmese Independence

Sir, - In his foreword to volume 1 of *Burma: The Struggle for Independence, 1944-1948*, the editor Hugh Tinker points out that "necessarily the documents available present a one-sided, essentially British view of affairs, however much an editor may try to rise above national bias". This point cannot be emphasized too strongly. Of the 679 documents reproduced in the volume, less than forty are attributable to Burmese, so while it provides a very complete picture of the British view of events during the period 1944-6, it can hardly be said to tell the story of Burma's struggle for independence. The title of this meticulously compiled volume is therefore misleading.

It is perhaps not surprising that the interpretation which Dennis Duncanson presents in his review (March 27) is an essentially British one. He sees the documents as telling the story of "a drama with three leading actors", namely Dorman-Smith, Mountbatten and my father.

Aung San. This version of a most eventful period is quite foreign to the Burmese, who view the negotiations with the British as but one aspect of the independence struggle. And while my father is honoured in Burma as the central figure of the independence movement, a balanced picture must also do justice to the efforts of the many other nationalists and the people of Burma, without whose support no one person could have led the country to freedom.

Duncanson concludes that Burma's precipitate independence plunged her into strife. The question of whether or not independence came too precipitately to Burma is one which is somewhat meaningless and more than a little insulting to a Burmese. British rule in Burma was but one phase, and a relatively short one at that, in the history of the country and in due course that phase came to an end. While it may be a British view that Burma was too soon in regaining her independence, it may be questioned whether "too soon" is a case which can be applied to what the people of the country see as a case of reclaiming their own.

Burma has had her share of troubles since independence, but there has been much worse civil and military strife in many Asian countries which suffered domination from colonial powers. Even in the Indian subcontinent, which has enjoyed relative peace and stability, there have been the horrors of partition, India's wars with Pakistan and China and the troubled emergence of Bangladesh. In reviewing the strife that has plagued former colonies, one is led to question whether much of it is not a result of the colonial experience rather than the natural consequence of independence.

It is perhaps inevitable that the British version of Burma's struggle for independence should differ essentially from the version of the Burmese themselves. I would like to say for the Burmese view that it is based on an awareness and understanding of the moods and aspirations of the nation. Dorman-Smith was greatly handicapped by his inability to grasp those moods and aspirations, and this inability can still be seen behind much of the British interpretation.

AUNG SAN SUU KYI,
15 Park Town, Oxford.

'The Reality of Communism'

Sir, - Reviewing *The Reality of Communism* (April 5), Sidney Hook is so impressed by the gloomy brilliance of Alexander Zinoviev's analysis of Soviet society, but so alarmed by the book's necessitarian thesis, that he draws on all his very considerable philosophic resources in an attempt to refute it. His argument, which centres on the role of contingency in history, can bring little comfort, however, since it fails to mention an area of desperate danger in which contingency is likely to destroy us.

As Hook summarizes his views, Zinoviev thinks that the Soviet system is not so much imposed from above as required from below, that given human nature (Hobbesian human nature, at least) and the scarcities and inequalities of a rapidly unified and mechanized world, Communism as it developed in the past half-century was not only inevitable but will continue to spread until it engulfs or obliterates the West.

Not so, says Hook. Contingency and free will can cancel out such predictions.

Curiously enough, the historical contingency to which Hook gives most attention is one which never occurred. To illustrate his contention that men make history, Hook cites the strong-willed Lenin who forced through his October Revolution against the objections and votes of the other Leftist Russian leaders. If Lenin, Hook says, had not got back to Russia in 1917 (there were "myriads of events that could have prevented his arrival"), subsequent revolutions would not have followed a Leninist model, and world history since would have been immeasurably different. Hook has been arguing this point since 1933; he even convinced Trotsky.

Since the contingency did not occur, speculation is as fruitless as with most life in writing history. The one actual contingency that Hook mentions is the death of Gandhi soon after

India gained independence. The effect was bad, as was the effect of most famous assassinations since the killing of Lincoln, if contingencies these may be called. In private life or public life contingencies or accidents usually do more harm than good. By definition unpredictable and uncontrollable, they impair our ability to manage our own destinies. In a crucial area which Hook does not mention, they are likely to take away not our freedom but our lives.

Necessity in history is a myth, Hook says, not only because of unpredictable contingencies but because men make their own history, men capable of altruism and self-sacrifice, of acting morally in the face of the seemingly inevitable, men enjoying, in other words, free will. Hook declares in his hortatory conclusion that if Zinoviev is right about the coming world victory of Leninist Communism, "the failure of nerve, intelligence and courage of the free world will have more to do with it than the ineluctable logic of events".

Hook does not say, though he has said it often elsewhere, what that courage requires of us. In his opinion and the opinions of those who think like him politically - The Committee for a Free World, for instance - nerve and intelligence require that the West depend, however risky it may be, on nuclear deterrence to contain the Communist threat in an arms race that seems to have its own ineluctable logic or inevitability. It is exactly here that the contingencies of which Hook makes so much can have their most disastrous results.

With tens of thousands of nuclear warheads on land, in the sea, in the air ready for instant launching, and with often only six minutes to make crucial decisions about the survival of whole cities, the chance of "contingencies", or accidents, in which the wrong person makes the wrong decision, or the wrong finger pushes the wrong button, is so great that it takes us from the probable to the inevitable.

If man is to make his own history, in defiance of the logic of a nuclear arms race that goes to more and more fantastic extremes, it must be in the exercise of a moral imagination designed towards getting rid of this threat as rapidly as possible, a kind of imagination requiring much more intelligence and capacity for altruism and self-sacrifice than most leaders of the free world - the realm of free will - have so far shown themselves able to display. Are they as much the moral prisoners of history as the leaders of the Communist countries, and taking us even more ineluctably to our doom? ROBERT GORHAM DAVIS,
83 Brattle Street, Apt 34, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138.

Parental Doubts

Sir, - Over the past few years I have been counselling couples who have sought donor insemination as a solution to their infertility problem. Few couples seem willing to confide in the child, preferring him or her to grow up in the belief that the husband is the biological father. On the other hand, a number of our couples have already confided in parents, siblings of close friends, which could lead to the child becoming aware of a mystery attaching to its paternity. I wonder whether any of your readers might be able to direct me to a novel or other work of literature in which one of the central characters has grown up with a similar state of uncertainty as a result of being illegitimate, or conceived through an extra-marital liaison.

MICHAEL HUMPHREY,
Department of Psychology, St George's Hospital Medical School, Jenner Wing, Cranmer Terrace, London SW17.

Julia Margaret Cameron

Sir, - That great artist of the camera Julia Margaret Cameron took many photographs of her friend the Poet Laureate Alfred Tennyson - but not the one you published on March 23. That splendid bearded figure posing as King Arthur is not Tennyson but William Warder, a porter at Yarmouth pier whom the dynamic Mrs Cameron conscripted for her illustrations of scenes from *Idylls of the King*. On other occasions he was pressed into her service as Sir Lancelot.

DENNIS L. BIRD,
37 The Avenue, Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex.

COMMENTARY

Revealed shortcomings

Jonathon Brown

GIACOMO PUCCINI
Turandot
Theatre Royal, Glasgow

Puccini died before *Turandot* was finished. At the instigation of Toscanini, Franco Alfano reluctantly supplied a full completion which Toscanini then insisted be reduced. Despite sporadic early instances of the full completion, in Germany mostly, a performance eighteen months ago at the Barbican was called the first performance. Most hoped it would mark the demise of the reduced completion, which lacked its emotional expanse and dramatic balance.

In the reduced version the transformation of Turandot from a coldly tormenting siren to an awakened loving woman was far too rapid. It should be more expansive, not only to stem our justified scepticism about the whole idea, but also better to compensate for the distastefully under-motivated suicide of Liù that is witnessed only moments before. Inasmuch as an ending can be achieved, the full Alfano is the best we have. Tony Palmer, directing his first opera, argues that for Puccini himself an ending could not be achieved; any such final triumph of Love was by then an intolerably false din to the composer whose volatile marriage had been charged with resentment and scepticism by events fifteen years before. In Palmer's idea, Puccini found himself like Wagner confronted by the blazing Love to be depicted in the third act of *Siegfried*: as if tongue-tied by integrity, he could not summon the music.

Fifteen years earlier or so, Puccini's young housemaid had killed herself. She had been driven to this by his wife's campaign of immundo and denouncement, for a supposed flirtation and consummated affair with Puccini. Post-mortem examination established her undefiled virginity, and her family, refusing Puccini's large offer of money, succeeded in their suit against his wife. Of course, this was some

Upon a painted ocean

Richard Combs

And the ship sails on
Academy Cinema

At his zenith, around the time of *La Dolce Vita* and *8½*, Fellini's name tended to be conjoined with those of Bergman and Antonioni. This triumvirate ruled the roost of mid-1960s art cinema — even perhaps set the seal on that respectable institution, giving widespread currency to the notion that cinema was art. In their hands, film could philosophize, could question itself and interrogate life; and this dispelled the worry about cinema's relation to photography, that it might be too mechanically mimetic to be art. The threesome actually had little in common — though the smell of greasepaint, a love of charlatans, clings to both Bergman and Fellini — except the fact that their talents were all basically quizzical. They were the doubting Thomases of spiritual faith (Bergman), intellectual certainty (Antonioni), and the creative act (Fellini).

All three have since suffered in swings of fashion, though more of the disillusionment seems to have stuck in Fellini's case. If Bergman and Antonioni have been in retreat, it is a retreat into their own rigorously. Fellini actually seems to have cheated: the three-ring circus that was once taken as a subversive metaphor for his own artistry now just sums up the art of a director who loves circuses. Fellini, in other words, may have topped over the fine line — genteelly trod by that other heavyweight, Orson Welles — between charlatanism and subject and as a way of operating. In *And the ship sails on*, the circus puts to sea, and the fact that it is staffed by singers, conductors and musicians — ocean-bound to scatter the ashes of one of their number, according to her last wishes — counts for less than their corporeality. The

disruption to Puccini's happy attitude to life. His work was patchy thereafter until he began to turn Gozzi's Chinese story into *Turandot*. He himself added the character of Liù to Gozzi's already packed play, though naturally much that typifies that rambling genre had to be cut. My own belief is that what in Gozzi is too meandering acquires presence through an informal charm, but that such fairy-tale truthfulness is suffocated by the condensed, unrelenting emotional naturalism of Puccini's music, as if the idiom of *Tristan* were applied to the Gozziesque *Magie Flute* story.

Still, before Palmer had his idea, there was something in Liù to warrant pity, and something in the Three Riddles to be staged tensely. Palmer has replaced Liù and the Prince with the housemaid and the composer. Behind them — they are in the corner of a rather low room that can only manage an upright piano — the remainder of the opera goes on, set against a shanty hill-town rooftop, despite the programme telling us that Torre del Lago was a village of twelve houses. (It is also on the edge of a marsh, and flat; also, the Prince-Puccini seems to have given up cigarettes, against all the photographic evidence: in this case for once such pernickiness is pertinent.) The crowds wear greekish Chinamen masks, and I think we are meant to see the midpoint between Peking and the marshes of Massaciucoli to be Colonos. The fearful trio of Furies, Ping, Pang and Pong, are nicely presented and delightfully realized as gossiping Italianan and endlessly malicious, meddling *passaggiaia*.

They are the chief mediation between the opera and the composer. Palmer has therefore not updated the opera into the composer's autobiography, but shows the infiltration of Puccini's past upon the eventually unbearable process of its composition. The maid dies in Prince-Puccini's arms, and the wife-Turandot is denied her newly desired love as the curtain comes down. This fails as theatre, and falls as a biographical footnote. Interaction between composer and opera is left necessarily vague and inconsistent. The maid-Liù is not even interrogated as to the Prince's name: she proclaims her knowledge unasked, and stabs her-

self. Her death is thus merely absurd, despite particularly strong characterization by Marie Slorach. Earlier, the Prince's correct answering of the Riddles has even been laughable, since we have to suppose that Prince-Puccini is after all the author of the questions he is answering. The tension becomes facetious, helped by the lighting.

Nor is Puccini shown to die, probably because Palmer wishes to stress the irrelevance of Puccini's death to the fact of the unfinished state of *Turandot*. This is plausible, and useful; indeed, it would be perfectly credible if backed up by the right information to do with the symptoms of his cancer, their timing and effects, as well as evidence pointing to the special trickiness of the last scenes — vouchsafed perhaps by excessive amounts of abandoned sketches and wasted time. And at least it contains a more subtle view of the artist's working life than we saw in Palmer's hilarious film *Wagner*. Yet even as crass and vapid theatre, how good is this biographical conjecture?

Certainly, the maid's suicide must have been an unpleasant event. No matter how summi-ly innocent the flirtation, the girl's death cost Puccini his marriage as well as most of his fluency. Had he lived beyond this crisis in *Turandot*, perhaps he could have achieved a profundity worthy of his unique palette. Palmer has his Puccini incapable of corroborating the plot's triumph of Love. But this may be only half the story. That is, Puccini could not bring himself to present the triumph of Love in so autobiographically allusive a plot not merely because it belied his experience, but also because he came to see that such Love was beyond his just desert in life. He had embarked

Head-in-air

Lucy Ellmann

Alberto Giacometti: The Last Two Decades
Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, Norwich, until June 17

Since his death in 1966, Alberto Giacometti has settled so easily into big banks and museums and so uneasily into artistic categories that the temptation is to forget about him. A carefully considered exhibition in Norwich of sculptures and paintings from Giacometti's most notable creative period is therefore a welcome surprise. While half of the show has been loaned by the Tate and anonymous collectors, the Sainsbury Centre and the Sainsburys themselves own a great deal of this work, which ranges from bronze sculptures of unnaturally gaunt human figures and busts of slightly plumper people done in live models, to painted and pencil-drawn portraits and pictures of Giacometti's studio, of city scenes and of a few trees.

In any medium, Giacometti's working method involves an explorative questioning of his subject and means. At times this becomes excessive, as in the seemingly needless number of thin brush-strokes in one picture, to depict a chair. In his sculpture this anxiety about the beginning and ending of an object leads him to a type of three-dimensional *sfumato*, not in order to leave the exact boundaries of objects to the imagination of the spectator but because his search for form was never completed. The rough indecisive surfaces of his work mock the usual finality of bronze sculpture. The sense of his subject, always (in his sculpture) the human figure, is concentrated in the slump of the back, the taut leg, or the eyes within the face, while the artistic material (plaster originally) is stretched, gouged and prodded, as if something precious had been lost in it. And owing to the economy of substance, and the excited handling of the medium, glimpses of human qualities do appear like discoveries.

In a bust of the artist's brother, the body is a tortured mass of bronze to match the troubled face. Giacometti's search for the model's soul demonstrated by his struggle with the medium. There is usually the same change between the treatment of the face and the body in his pictures. He felt that "if the gaze, that is, life, is the main thing, then the head becomes the main thing. The rest of the body is limited."

upon an opera that revealed his shortcomings in the matter of the girl's fate, revealed indeed his cowardice and shirking coldness in that regard. Oddly, Toscanini's gesture on the first night of all, laying down his baton where Puccini had ceased, turns out to be the deepest justice.

Palmer falsifies the biographical details we are shown on stage. It is not true that the maid stabbed herself quickly; she took insufficient sublimate and died sordidly over five days. Nor did she die in Puccini's arms. For months before, Puccini had always abandoned the house at Torre at every opportunity, unable to cope. He was in Rome during the days of the girl's death, I believe; in his biography Mosco Canner is unhelpful. As it is, he calls the chapter "Tragic Interlude", which — to judge by the tone of Puccini's letter in which there is as full an account of it all as he was prepared to offer — must be biographical for "blasted nuisance".

Whether Puccini was a thoughtlessly easy-going cad, ever winking cheerily at skirt, or had merely miscalculated the involvement of the maid, the power of Italian village *calunnia* and the invective of his wife, requires more elaborate discussion than can sensibly be given here. Palmer's raising of the questions has cost us an entertainment in the theatre, though a Peter Shaffer might be able to concoct a spectacle from the events and their subsequent haunting return to the composer. The heartlessness and vanity of the Prince Calaf, unsympathetically fearless, and passionate in his lovelessness, must have brought the composer to his knees. It was not the scale of Love that daunted him in those final scenes, but this revelation of his smallness and earlier human cold falling.

to functioning as antennae that make people's life possible — the life that is housed in the skull."

Unceremoniously abandoned in a stage between form and formlessness, his sculptures move from man to mere matter and back again, depending on the fall of light on a rough-hewn shoulder. It is in the doing of the thing, and the ability of the sculpture to capture and to some extent re-enact the artist's experience, that Giacometti finds any purpose. He told Sartre, after destroying some figures, "I was satisfied with them but they were made in only a few hours". Even the work he cast in bronze suggests a tenuous grasp of reality and the effort involved in forcing the figure into being, and the form into space. Yet despite the visible remains of conflicting statements in his sculptures, the conclusion repeatedly reached through Giacometti's wild wrestlings with his materials — his notoriously elongated human form — argues a certainty within the process, which, singly, his sculptures perhaps appear to lack. In a small group sculpture called "City Square", five figures parade, insect-like in the similarity of their forms but given dignity by different stances.

Like stalagmites, Giacometti's figures grow upwards, often from unpleasantly large feet, and insert themselves delicately into a pocket of space as if it were a tight squeeze. Their best chance is to grow in a purely vertical direction, alternating between tight muscles and tense joints in rhythmic progression. They have few details, but arm-pits, breast, knees and the firm lobe of the skull survive, as if essential.

The strong sharp lines of these figures break through the enroaching space, of which Giacometti had a somewhat Pascalian dread, but are also stilled by it, like stone-age flint arrowheads lined up in glass cases, long since retired from service. In his drawings Giacometti's use of perspective presents space as truly enveloping; the background advancing, jungle-fashion, on the objects inhabiting it. Free of the enforced positioning in an environment of objects in pictures, his sculptures are bolder. They work their way into the space around them and claim it, as individual trees dominate their part of the park, so that each figure seems isolated in a no man's land of its own making. Space is never quite conquered or quietened. Giacometti's people may be tiny, but he might well have created more matter with less art.

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Playhouse platitudes

Peter Kemp

All the World's a Stage
BBC2

In the book of his television series (321pp. BBC/Secker and Warburg. £12.95. 0 563 17932 5), Ronald Harwood expresses thanks to "two people of . . . efficiency, integrity and sweetness" who "saw me into motorcars, aeroplanes and railway trains". Their task can't have been easy. For, rather literally fulfilling its title — *All the World's a Stage: One Man's Journey Through The Theatre* — Harwood's history of drama turns out to be highly geographical. Programmes whisk him from Bali to Bergen, Sweden to Spain. He jumps from Broadway to Moscow, perambulates around Athens, Rome, Florence, Vicenza and Weimar.

Not that this globe-trotting ever really gets the programme anywhere — since Harwood's intellectual luggage, unpacked in various picturesque spots, largely consists of platitude and narcissism. "I believe" rings worshipfully through his scripts. The first person singular constantly clamours for attention: "I've become absolutely convinced", "Now, my own instinct, if I know anything at all about actors . . .". Astonishingly, the first programme — supposedly chronicling the emergence of drama — is mainly devoted to film of the Broadway first night of Harwood's *The Dresser*. Sensing this may raise eyebrows ("Now what, you may ask, has a contemporary play on Broadway to do with ancient rituals?"), Harwood suggests that what is happening here is just as numinous as the rituals from which drama evolved. The inability to distinguish between rituals which developed into drama, and rituals peripherally and vulgarly associated with modern productions of it typifies the programmes' mental level. For Harwood, the origins of drama can be illuminated by film of him hugging his actors as they troop off stage ("We must take comfort where we can") or wringing his hands ("The drop in tension is only temporary") as the cast head for the alcohol and eatables of a party during "those dreaded hours" before the reviews appear.

Bringing the programme closer to home movie than world drama, Harwood splices in to it film of the house and desk "where I wrote the play". Periodically reverting to this strain, later episodes include shots of him beaming upwards from a medieval circle as a camera-carrying helicopter spirals over him, or — in a masque theatre in Sweden — being hoisted aloft on a wooden cloud. Most of the woodiness and cloudiness, though, is in the commentary. Truism — "Impersonation is at the heart of the drama", "Comedy should make you laugh" — are solemnly proffered, along with portentous generalization: "The comic spirit is universal

and eternal". There are entertaining moments in which Harwood strives to make his meaning unambiguous — "Now, I'm not saying that Schiller caused the French Revolution". But, for the most part, his insights are of paralysing banality: Sophocles is "haunted by the human condition", "Shakespeare is truly a universal figure". With his habitual air of regarding seasoned platitude as the freshest of perceptions, Harwood daringly advances the notion that "Shakespeare's work is, to my mind, one of the glories of Western culture". Characteristically, this is instantly followed by a swivelling of the spotlight back on to himself — "I must confess he's been central to my life for as long as I can remember".

Often appearing literally centre stage, Harwood stands around in a large number of theatres during the series. The most informative bits of his commentaries, in fact, are those concerned with different staging conventions and what gave rise to them. Not content with explaining the origins of various types of playhouse, though, the programmes go on to pack them with costumes and grotesques representing "typical audiences" so that the Restoration theatre, for example, is illustrated by a rum-bustious *mélée* of rakes and orange girls, sword-writhing gallants and beauty-patched whores slipping booty filched from pockets into their cleavages.

Extracts from plays often receive a similar technicolor treatment. *The Bacchae* has Terence Stamp done up in beaded lovelocks, blusher and russet eyeshadow to indicate Dionysus' sexual ambiguity. The proposal scene from *The Way of the World* is played with Millamant and Mirabell, emitting erotic moans, bathed in green and purple light. Visually, things constantly tend towards the garish. Dionysiac forces, for example, are demonstrated by film of a nipple, a lion assaulting a zebra, and a heavily-lipsticked woman baring her teeth. Squandering time on such sequences — and dubious digressions about the way, after the First World War, "humanity felt prey to a universal sickness from which we continue to suffer", the series leaves itself insufficient time to deal adequately with the drama of recent centuries. The concluding episode on contemporary theatre is especially squashed and lopsided. But, everywhere, there are incongruities: more time devoted to *Oklahoma* and *A Chorus Line* than to Shaw, for example. Moments of fine acting refreshingly come to the fore in some of the illustrative extracts. But — in keeping, perhaps, with his theory that drama has progressed through a "series of explosions" — Harwood's programmes are spectacularly fragmentary.

Shooting Stars: Plays and Players 1975-1983 (383pp. Quartet. £15. 0 7043 2388 5) collects the best of Sheridan Morley's *Punch* theatre reviews of the past eight years.

Suavity and subjugation

Harold Hobson

ALAN DRURY
Mr Hyde
New End Theatre

Alan Drury's *Mr Hyde*, presented by the quaintly named but highly talented Paines Plough company, is a philosophical play rendered in terms of sensationalism. Hiltherto Drury has shown himself a young master of the simple, the quiet, and the compassionate. His favourite subjects have been people just a fraction on the wrong side of the line dividing happiness from failure: a clerk meditating his lack of advancement; a schoolmaster grieved that his colleagues should even consider him capable of assaulting one of his pupils; a passing tilt between two working-class families on a seaside holiday together. All has been sympathetic, quiet, and the ordinary lives of ordinary men and women.

But in *Mr Hyde* Drury forsakes the world of simple man and women for melodrama; for structural elaboration of plot; vampirism; murder; exhibitionism; Freemasonry; royalty; plays within a play; perverse exploitation of the

young and inexperienced; the flashing of an open cut-throat razor a couple of feet from those sitting in the front row (an alarming and impressive scene); and a profusion of literary allusions stretching from the obvious reference (as well as some more recondite) to Stevenson, through Ruskin, to the corrupt pages of Pauline Réage's *Histoire d'O* that tell of women being taught obedience to men in sexual subjugation.

The suave, smiling and elegant Mr Hyde (Simon Shepherd), like the disguised Prince in *The New Arabian Nights*, seeks amusement in places as strange as "The Suicide Club" of Stevenson's macabre imagination: in this case in another club, dripping with blood-red curtains, whose proprietor Turner (Robert Demegeer) presents questionable entertainments for the delectation of bored members of the Victorian upper classes. We see these entertainments: the narrative of a middle-aged murderer from Edinburgh; the garrotting of the same lady; her empty coffin; and her slaughter of her young sister Catherine (Katrin Cartlidge). These are presented by Turner with immense aplomb, and the director, John Chapman, and the players are amazingly successful in preventing them from appearing tedious.

But Turner (who, like the lady in Beatrice Lillie's famous song, is "rotten to the core") surprisingly makes at least an effort to make

On the funny farm

Julian Symons

GEORGE ORWELL
Animal Farm
Cottesloe Theatre

The texts of books, directors, adaptors and script writers all remind us, are not sacred. What we should ask, they say, is whether the work succeeds in its own right, whether the interpretation in another medium is itself a work of art — or, if that is putting things too high, at least whether it offers an enjoyable evening in the theatre or thirteen good hours on the box. Well, perhaps, although for every successful transition like that made by Paul Scott's novels, a dozen works drop into the abyss, like *The Weather in the Streets*. And some things can't be done, shouldn't be attempted. You can't compress *War and Peace* into the shape of a film, or expand *Animal Farm* into a play. Peter Hall's adaptation, which might be called "from an idea of George Orwell's", with lyrics by Adrian Mitchell, and fragments of additional dialogue presumably from Sir Peter himself, is painful proof of this. It has a simple but ingenious set designed by Jennifer Carey, and one good idea, the device by which a young boy stays on stage throughout, reading passages that provide a thread of narrative through which the action is picked up. Otherwise almost all is disaster, some of it foreseeable.

There are difficulties of a literal kind. It is easy to say in a book that four legs are good and two bad, but how do you show this on a stage where we must be aware that two of the four animal legs are a pretence? The point is not merely captious. Since the difference between animals and men is at the heart of the story, much is bound to be lost when men and women (however well equipped with masks, trotters and hooves) play animals. Nor can one help reflecting, when the third commandment of *Animal Farm*, "No animal shall wear clothes", is pronounced, that the animals are in fact wearing clothes, in most cases loose black garments. Is it suggested that they should be naked? No, just that the thing can't be done. A clever but similarly unsuccessful attempt is made to realize the book's marvellous last sentence, in which the other farm animals look "from pig to man . . . but already it was impossible to say which was which", when at the banquet held by pigs and humans the cast turn round, remove masks, and are revealed as identical — but as identical men. The pigs were men, after all.

Perhaps these are forgivable failures. No excuse can be made for the lyrics added by Adrian Mitchell, or for the bits of comic stage business. The combination of the two transforms the story from a political fable into a

culous. Instead, they are truly horrible.

But of course they are not real. As Mr Hyde points out with exquisite refinement, the murderer from Edinburgh has not really murdered anyone; nor is the young girl genuinely slaughtered. "It is all make-believe; and the question arises whether make-believe is enough, and even whether the real thing is morally worse than the imagination of it. Religious men have in their righteous zeal supported the position taken up by Mr Hyde, for is not he who has lost in his heart as guilty as the adulterer? No, he is not, some philosophers, including G.E. Moore, have answered with indignation. But in spite of all the discussion and mental somersaulting that have been devoted in the lecture room to this problem it has never been finally settled. If you begin to climb a ladder who, asks Mr Hyde, shall tell you at what rung you shall stop? And no one answers him, not so much because they have read and remembered the New Testament, as that Mr Hyde (as both his bearing and the programme testify) is a very well-connected young man indeed.

But Turner (who, like the lady in Beatrice Lillie's famous song, is "rotten to the core") surprisingly makes at least an effort to make

romp. There are two songs in Orwell's tale, and they are precisely placed, the first to mark the dream of an idyllic animal kingdom, the second to show the adulation given to Napoleon/Stalin. Mr Mitchell adds perhaps a dozen more. Almost everybody has a song, Mr Jones, Mollie, Clover, Boxer, Snowball, Napoleon, ending with the song at the banquet which proclaims "More profits for fewer people". The best of the songs are deeply in debt to Brecht, but he would have discarded them as lacking verve and style, and desperately crude in their attempts at social irony. From the time when Mr Jones comes in singing that he guards his servants with a gun, through Boxer's "There was a whacking great limestone boulder" to Napoleon's "In the litter of seventeen I was the smallest pig", the songs give the piece an unintended synthetic jollity. Who could really be afraid of twinkling-eyed Napoleon when he confesses that he was the runt, who could believe there was anything sinister about those cheerful farmers? They seem as harmless as the villain in a pantomime, and the comic business adds to the pantomime effect. Boxer is seen scratching his head over the alphabet, a good deal is made of such things as the cat's activity in relation to sparrows in the Re-education Committee, and Mollie's refusal to learn anything but the letters of her own name. These things appear in Orwell's fiction, but they take on a disproportionate importance when played out on the stage, often inevitably with bits of additional dialogue.

The uncertainty of Peter Hall's handling is apparent throughout, as the prevailing jokiness moves into occasional attempts to be serious. Snowball is shown as a possibly impractical but genuine revolutionary hero, against Orwell's intention — as he pointed out, Snowball connived at the first act of betrayal when the milk was taken to add to the pigs' mash. The scenes when the animals confess to imaginary treachery and are then torn to pieces by the dogs might have been sombre or moving, but fail to carry conviction because all the fun and games has encouraged us to look for laughs. The effect of these wholesale purges is the absurd one that very few animals are left to see the pigs and farmers unite at the end. Did only pigs and dogs survive? Not according to Orwell.

One cannot expect that Orwell's intention, to attack the Russian purges and show trials, and criticize the myth of Soviet socialism, should survive strongly today. It is all too long ago. But his explanation, quoted in the programme note, that "I proceeded to analyse Marx's theory from the animals' point of view" and went on from there — that should certainly be present, and is altogether missing. A timeless fable has been turned into a poorly-told joke.

Mr Hyde swerve from his elegant and homicidal course. In a scene in which he is baited, under the amused eyes of the imperturbable Hyde, by the members of his club, he angrily tries to escape from the wickedness for which he has himself created the setting: Robert Demegeer plays this scene with considerable vigour. So indeed do all the cast (including Mary Ellen Ray, Andrew Frances, Godfrey Jackman, and Iain Mitchell) approach their parts; while Shepherd's Mr Hyde is excellent in a character of charming horror, bringing to the glittering razor the elegance of Queen Charlotte's Ball. The director and designer (Gregory Smith) establish their horrors on the New End's tiny stage with great finesse, and when at the finish Mr Hyde, his opera cloak throwing huge and menacing shadows, approaches nearer and nearer to us out of the fog with the gleaming weapon in his hand the effect is both beautiful and frightening.

Recently published playscripts include Michael Frayn's *Benefactors*, reviewed in the *TLS* of April 27 (70pp. Methuen. £2.95. 0 413 54160 6); David Hare's "History Plays" — *Knuckle*, *Licking Hitler* and *Plenty* — (207pp. Faber. £3.50. 0 571 13132 8); and Kevin Elyot's *Coming Clean* (72pp. Faber. £3.50. 0 571 13228 6).

John Co. 1.16

D. J. Enright

VICTOR BONHAM-CARTER
 Authors by Profession:
 Volume Two, From the Copyright Act 1911
 to the end of 1981
 336pp. Bodley Head. £12.50.
 0370306007

"How authors, dramatists, and radio and screen writers have practised their professions in their respective media; their contracts and earnings; their situation under the law. . . . Thus begins the epigraph to the present book. As regards experience, expertise and tidiness of mind, no one could be better qualified to write it than Victor Bonham-Carter. Interesting as the past must be, this second volume cannot but engage us more closely.

If much of it reads like a history of the Society of Authors, for which Bonham-Carter worked for some twenty years, then that, we suppose, is in the nature of things: testimony to the Society's multifarious and unremitting endeavours. The Copyright Act of 1911; A. P. Herbert and the Obscene Publications Acts of 1959 and 1964 (by way of spurring things on, in 1958 he proposed to stand as an Independent candidate at the East Harrow by-election: greater love hath no author for his fellows . . .); libel and the hazards of "unintentional defamation"; confrontations with the BBC; and arguments with the Publishers Association (founded in 1896, twelve years after the Society of Authors) over, for example, the division of proceeds from paperback and other subsidiary rights; the appearance of such offshoots as the League of Dramatists (1931), the Screenwriters' Association (1937), the Radiowriters' Association (1947); the telling pamphlets on the state of authorship written by Walter Allen (1953) and Richard Findlater (1963, 1966); the variety of problems arising from taxation, and the ongoing embarrassments of patronage; the registration of the Society of Authors as a trade union; the campaign for Public Lending Right. . . .

All of this, and more, is recorded not only with greater clarity than one could reasonably have expected but with elegance too. Nor is the account as dry, if worthy, as any summary must suggest. Proper tribute is rendered to such underpaid and overworked stalwarts as Elizabeth Barber, eventually General Secretary of the Society. Featured among her lively recollections is Mrs Barlow, the office char, who (a model to all professionals) established such an efficient system of charging for her diverse services that she came to earn more than Elizabeth Barber, a barrister no less. For Mrs Barlow, "John Buchanan was always 'Jack Buchanan', and copies of the *Drolit d'Antier* were always the 'Droitwich Papers' which she refused to dust however dusty they got." The reader may hope that Mrs Barlow, who carried her marriage-lines in the leg of her bloomers in case anyone doubted her status, is to emerge as a romantic novelist in the tradition of Barbara Cartland. Alas, unable to tolerate the country, she returned to London during the Blitz and disappeared.

What bedevils authorship, or the theory of it, is the fact that some authors are much more equal than others. Catherine Cookson can make demands - I don't say that she does - which Josephine Soap has no chance of getting away with. A contract for a specific book, not for the delivery of identical and equally saleable articles. Writing is a field in which people would rather labour sweetly than not labour at all; it is (with all the good that this implies, and all the vulnerability) a vocation as well as a profession. We may be amused to hear, apropos of unemployment benefit (or the absence of it), that the Department of Health and Social Security classifies authorship as a "remunerative occupation" *tout court*. Bonham-Carter estimates that a playwright's earnings "can range from nil to £100,000 or more in a year (if he has a 'hit'), or any sum in between", adding that according to a recent survey (1982) only about twenty-five playwrights succeed in earning the average national wage of £8,000 per annum from the live theatre alone.

"Does a dentist have to run a restaurant to get by?" he asks, with writers of all kinds in

mind. Well, if there were a notable superfluity of dentists, they might need to run sweet-shops on the side to drum up business. But we take it that, by definition if not by experience, all dentists are good dentists. It had never occurred to me that writers shouldn't take on another job, even a "full-time" one. Indeed, in a feeble way I sometimes wondered how the writer who only wrote could find anything to write about. Bonham-Carter believes that "without proper recognition and adequate reward, authorship as a profession will suffer a serious decline. Unaided, it cannot continue of its own volition." I have my doubts about that - and even greater doubts that, should it happen, it would mean the end of literature.

The battle for Public Lending Right was won twenty-eight years after John Brophy published his "Open Letter" in *The Author*, the Society's journal, suggesting that every reader should pay 1d for every volume borrowed from a public library, and A. P. Herbert had taken up the cudgels again. All praise is due to the Society and to the Writers' Action Group for their dedication, and specifically to specific persons. All the same, it looks as if the mountain of effort has given birth to a mouse. Once again, to those who already have shall be given. Authors who do well out of their royalties and subsidiary rights are those who do well - as well as the rules prudently allow - out of PLR. Since the proceeds are taxable, and most of the money goes to payers of heavy tax, the scheme's chief effect is to provide much-needed work for civil servants whose job is to transfer government money from one office of government to another.

PLR is egalitarian in that it works by a straight count (one loan, one penny; literally, at present, 1.02p), but less so in the outcome: during its first year forty-six authors each received the maximum of £5,000 while 3,878 received between £1 and £99 each. But PLR was not meant as a charity or a grant to those who, in the nineteenth-century terminology of the Civil List, can demonstrate both "Desert and Distress". (Poets seem to have profited meagrely from it. It has been noted that people incline to read poetry books on the premises rather than take them home: perhaps an electric eye, a browser-detector, could record such usages? Or an extra ticket be issued, for borrowing poetry only - but such a measure might well be spurned as both elitist and fascist.) Nothing very bad about PLR, then - and if the principle is right, perhaps we should rest content with that.

Bonham-Carter is equally approving of the registration of the Society of Authors as a trade union in 1978. Here the morals of the matter seem much more uncertain. The strength of a union lies in the readiness of its members to strike *in toto*, ie, to withdraw their labour, which I cannot see happening in the case of the Society's members. Part of this strength - and leaving aside the desirability for the product involved to be a *necessity* - derives from the proscription of non-members, the closed shop, and that, one trusts, the members of the Society would never themselves contemplate. So the power of the Society is hardly likely to be much stronger than it was before unionization, when it achieved so much through the power of its personalities and the justness of its arguments, and the respect felt for both. Indeed, it might grow weaker. Another union! How distinguished it was not to belong to one. However phillistine it may be, the great British public has a sneaking admiration for writers, those (albeit impoverished) spiritual libertines, those unbonded souls.

The question of becoming a trade union was settled in democratic fashion by postal ballot, and egalitarianly: one member, one vote. The result was a 2:1 vote in favour; and fewer than 100 members resigned subsequently. Some members may have believed that belonging to a union would raise their penny a line to 10p or enable them, to extract more advantageous terms from intimidated publishers. But more were moved by fear of being blacked by the print unions. Fear of unions drove them into a union. Fear is an eminently understandable motive, but not an especially noble one. Fortunately the general public has not yet cottoned on to the fact that the Society is a union, which may tell us something.

As Bonham-Carter makes clear at the outset, his book is "devoted to the history of the business of writing in Britain, and presented from the authors' point of view". Literary criticism would certainly be tricky to assimilate into the story. Still, we could do with a little more of the publishers' point of view. Otherwise - and for all that Bonham-Carter is no extremist - they must seem, *in absentia*, what they often seem by their presence: the authors' enemy number one. To begin with, what is a publisher? Graham C. Greene and Lord Weidenfeld, or Miss X and Mr Y who slog away reading typescripts, checking names and dates, chasing ISBNs, concocting blurbs, correcting proofs, without ever getting their names in the papers? Humble (and for the most part humbly paid) jobs in publishing call for - and obviously don't always get - a combination of talents and knowledgeableness which in the academic world would ensure simultaneous occupation of chairs in several disparate subjects. No wonder things go wrong from time to time! I labour the point because some authors are convinced that they are keeping a whole establishment of layabouts in luxury, besides paying the rent, the telephone and electricity bills and the cost of luncheon vouchers.

Since it is well known that everyone can write whereas not everybody can print, bind and sell a book, the paucity of understanding between publisher and author must be laid largely at the publishers' doorstep. Publishers tend to be secretive; with some reason: the less the author knows of what is going on, the less he will interfere. And, to keep his end up, the publisher fosters his equivalent of the mystery or mystique of the writer's art. At the same time, authors quite often prefer not to know what happens in publishers' offices, either out of vanity (the mere mechanics of manufacture and trade! As for spelling, our servants will do that for us), or because of modesty: they feel they wouldn't understand anyway, or ignorance might help to preserve whatever bliss is in the offing. After working in publishing for a few weeks, I began to wonder how any of my own books had managed to get taken on - by some lapse of concentration, maybe, some clerical error?

In their relations, authors are not infrequently either arrogant or abject towards publishers, and publishers either cagey or magisterial (blinding with ancient instances and modern cost-estimates) towards authors. Both need to come down a peg or two, or in

some cases go up one. Bonham-Carter, that in *The Truth about Publishing* (1980), that a royalty statement should always be printed as well as those sold. However, the 1946 edition Unwin remarked that "proved such a rod for our backs" that many copies were lost through enemy action; that he could no longer recommend the practice. Now that we live in a time of peace, speak, perhaps publishers could afford to be more forthcoming about the stock, printing, book's print-run is commonly treated as a secret.

Unwin spoke up well in defence of these contractual clauses securing the publisher's share on the author's future work. "No man was expected to till virgin soil if he had uncertainty of reaping more than the first crop," suggest that he ought to be satisfied to his open competition with those who had to do nothing to prepare the soil would be unjust." (In later editions the language is resonant, or more demotic: "No man would expect to 'take in' uncultivated ground. . . .") But to call for an option on the author's next three books strikes me as a bit quaint: if the first next is rejected, then the second, or by an equally worthy (ie, in no way "quaint") publisher, is the latter to have no option on the second next?

One author of my acquaintance, a *deus* man, a highbrow even (or should it be course?), for long believed that the publisher committed the publisher to accept the author's next three books. Though perhaps a little extreme case, this misapprehension points to a sheer lack of mutual understanding which pervades transactions between individuals of intelligence and articulateness. Less paradoxical both sides and more candour might bring two parties together, if only on the principle that they share the same enemies. (What not only other publishers, other authors, but also the public, are not proposing to unionize! Despite the confusion, unjustness and misery generally present, it is hard to envisage any other viable system which wouldn't be in one way another totalitarian - and therefore worse. We had better stick to diversity, to plurality - publishers and of authors - and to the balance precariously yet persistently kept between books as art or knowledge and books as commerce.

One man's map

Neil Berry

HARRY BLAMIRE (Editor)
A Guide to Twentieth-Century Literature in English
 312pp. Methuen. £16.
 0416561802

It is becoming unusual for reference books to be content simply to dispense information: often nowadays they are also intended to stimulate. Harry Blamires, in his introduction to *A Guide to Twentieth-Century Literature in English*, discloses that he and his two fellow compilers have been free with their opinions. In the belief, it seems, that an unopinionated guide might put readers to sleep. Yet a book like this, encyclopedic in form, is more likely to be consulted than read; and it might be felt that utility rather than readability ought to have been the primary concern.

The book surveys what its editor takes to be this century's noteworthy writing in English, American writing excepted. The text proceeds alphabetically. Over 500 biographies are blended with literary assessments, and major works receive individual attention. Mr Blamires himself is responsible for the British, which means most of the entries. He writes, to be sure, with verve and appears widely-read and independent-minded. In point of general usefulness and reliability, a weightier consideration, Blamires' contributions are often vulnerable to criticism. The annotation is unsystematic, unlocated quotations mingling with

precisely placed ones; and the bibliography is even scrappier: Carpenter's biography of Auden is cited, but not Crick's of Orwell. Glendinning's of Edith Sitwell but not Holroyd of Strachey. And so on.

By design the *Guide* skimps on critics. There are entries for Middleton Murry and F. R. Leavis; but they are thin. The influence of Leavis's work on education and on writing generally was so great that any guide to English literature over the past fifty years that fails to give it proportionate acknowledgment must be accounted misleading. Absurdly, Blamires pays more attention to C. E. Montague, the book's most irritating feature is its avoidance of subject entries. Though there are few references to movements, there are no separate accounts of any. Admittedly it is possible to guess from author entries what *Bloomington* or what the so-called Movement stood for, but the whole point of a guide-book is surely to make guessing unnecessary, indeed to put an end to it.

As the survey approaches the present, the drawing of the literary map - at least of the British one - becomes very crude indeed. A. N. Wilson is in, but not William Boyd, Malcolm Bradbury is there but not David Lodge. This makes one wonder about some of the - to an English reader - less familiar entries: Ngugi wa Thiong'o the only Kenyan writer deserving of inclusion? Is Okot p'Bitek Ugandan's sole literary contender? The editor has attempted the impossible with too little success and, struggling to be both authoritative and diverting, has ended up with a book which will satisfy few readers.

Lesser breeds

Basil Cottle

GLANVILLE PRICE
The Languages of Britain
 245pp. Edward Arnold. £16.50.
 07131 63968

The sombre theme of this handsome book is "English is a killer"; the subject, all languages ever spoken in the present United Kingdom, Man, and the Channel Islands; the method, a searching history of the beginning of each, and too often its ending, with documentation of its earliest texts. As a Welshman, I now feel no gloomier about the prospects of Welsh; Glanville Price holds out hope, if the people have the will. On every other language, he is glum, and my own experience bears out his good sense in this. In 1952 I was led to where they would speak Manx for me, though not having prepared myself I received little more than an aural sensation; but Ned Maddrell died in 1974, and the living tongue with him, unless enthusiasts and the twenty precious hours of tape-recordings can effect a real revival. In 1952, also, I heard plenty of Scots Gaelic on the mainland, though at Duror in Appin a Gaelic-speaking husband, whose wife only understood it, said "I tell her a dog can do that". Now it is receding everywhere save in some of the islands, and the Outer Hebrides could well become its only - but perhaps permanent - refuge. In the 1940s, in Cornwall, I bought up all the Cornish linguistic material on which Professor Price is so scathing, enjoyed the hospitality of the formidable Tregoning Hooper, Librarian of Falmouth, and heard the family talking Cornish over tea; but our author will have none of it. The revived Cornish he proposes to call "Cornic", which sounds like "corny" and rather takes a liberty; he is harsh here - it is not as if all knowledge of how Cornish sounded died with Dolly Pentreath, because surviving words stirred into English, the intonations of Duchy English, the sounds of Welsh and (especially) Breton, and homely spellings of Cornish words as heard by outsiders, must converge on a fair delineation of its music, and it is unjust to deny the revivalists the adoption of new words by analogy with the sister languages, since all languages have a duty to adapt themselves and grow.

For a book adducing exact linguistic facts as proof, there are far too many misprints: "tally-sicks" (page 29, line 6); "buffon" (33.25); "hoan" for "haon" (35.15); "Ardesier" (56.45) and "Ardesier" (60.9) for "Ardesier"; the *Brady Llyfrau Gleision* first assigned to 1874 (103.15) instead of 1847; an Old English Pater-noster with many mistakes of spacing and omitted thorn (173.36-40), followed by an omitted thorn in *Beowulf* and another at 198.35. On two questions of fact, *mout le plus* (224.48) is "much" (not "all") "the more", and no one now ascribes *Prick of Conscience* to Richard Rolle; but the scholarship is throughout relentless, the languages from Pictish to Romani are here for the first time available for comparison.

The author, himself a Celt, is most moving on the Celtic languages: the brief future of Scots Gaelic - how many now "remember it rather than speak it?" - the wonderful linguistic influence of the Welsh Bible (a warning to those Anglicans who would throw away the glories of 1611 and 1662); the urgent need for further place-name study in Wales (which would retrieve much of Welsh history); the tragedy of Manx, eroded by the schools and, too often, the churches. Good, wise Bishop Hildesley of Sodor and Man did his best for it in the 1700s, and the Methodists (as with Channel Islands French) were still using it when Arbory was the last parish church where it was heard. On other areas, the impartially amassed facts leave me with less sense of loss; Anglo-Romani of the "I puvved my vardo" type is as legitimate as backslang; Hugh MacDiarmid's "synthetic" Scots is snubbed; and my experience last summer of the innumerable Norman idiolects in Jersey, Guernsey and Sark (not a word did I hear in Alderney or Herm) confirms the signals of their doom - yet how wise they can be, as in their retention of a "proper" *h* in the island that sounds like Lee-Hoo. The section on English is unavoidably the most ordinary, but at least it celebrates the escape from the old Oxford-Cambridge-London origin of the standard tongue.

Historians, archaeologists, geographers and patriots should own this book. Little languages can be saved if there is a will; I recall my delight in 1955 at Faroese, firmly coexisting with Danish in that ideal diglossia which Professor Price advocates.

Going national

Giulio Lepschy

BRUNO MIGLIORINI and **T. GWYNFOR GRIFFITH**
The Italian Language
 553pp. Faber. £22.50.
 0571 180736

Bruno Migliorini's history of the Italian language is a formidable work of scholarship which is still unsurpassed and is likely to remain so for a long time to come. When, several years ago, T. Gwynfor Griffith's excellent adaptation became unavailable, this was felt as a great loss by the English-speaking public interested in Italian culture. It is therefore with much satisfaction that we can now greet the reappearance of this book.

For this new edition Professor Griffith has introduced some corrections, modifications, and bibliographical additions in the text. But the main feature of the edition is a vastly enlarged last chapter, devoted to the period of 1915-82, and a new Epilogue, which together are about twenty pages longer than the equivalent chapter in the previous edition. The final bibliography also adds about twenty-five items ably chosen from the extensive literature published in the past twenty years.

It is of course possible (as happens inevitably in any work which compresses so much in such a short space) to query individual formulations or omissions. For instance, I would have liked to find, in the list of etymological dictionaries on p. 478, the important new one started in 1979 by M. Cortelazzo and P. Zolli. It may be misleading to read that some anglo-latins have been adapted, while others have been transferred to Italian without adaptation, e.g. *auditorium*, *symposium* (p. 506). If one is not also told

of the availability of *auditorium* (defended by Migliorini; and see examples by Cecchi and Comisso in Battaglia's Dictionary) and *simposio*. But to list minor points of this kind would be to give the wrong impression of an excellent work.

Professor Griffith has given us a masterly synthesis of developments in the Italian language during this century, which are particularly important as this is the period in which Italian changed from a literary language used by an educated minority to a national language available to most of the population. He has managed to follow the pattern of the preceding chapters of Migliorini's work, which for each century outlines the main social and political developments, examines changes in spelling, phonology, morphology, syntax and lexis, and discusses the relations between Italian and other languages as well as the studies devoted to it. At the same time he conveys the exciting feeling of novelty involved by the quickening tempo of modernization in Italian society, the changing relationships between Italian and dialects, the new status of regional varieties of the standard language, at the expense of the traditional Florentine model, and the emergence of what has been called "popular Italian".

In his epilogue Professor Griffith takes what appears to me the wisest line on issues which are still hotly debated, and his sensitivity is a reminder of his own interest and participation in Welsh culture: "It is to be hoped that wider knowledge of Italian will be accompanied not only by recognition of the legitimacy of regional forms but also by a more generous attitude to dialect and minority languages. . . . Surely, now that knowledge of Italian is growing so fast, we can afford to realize that death of a local language is also the death of a certain sort of culture, and that ignorance of it is no more a virtue than other forms of ignorance."

As the highlanders say

William Gillies

CHARLES W. J. WITHERS
Gaelic in Scotland 1698-1981
 352pp. Edinburgh: Donald. £18.
 0859760979

The aim of this study is to investigate certain aspects of the "interface" between Gaelic and English over the last three centuries. Charles Withers examines a series of documentary sources containing explicit or implicit information about the speaking of Gaelic in Scotland, ranging from the James Kirkwood papers concerning the distribution of Gaelic Bibles in the Highlands in the 1690s, through the *Old and New Statistical Account* (1791-99 and 1831-45), to the decennial Census Reports (which have contained statements on the speaking of Gaelic since 1881), with a view to elucidating what the author calls the "geographical history" of the Gaelic language.

The picture Dr Withers painstakingly builds up is considerably fuller and more comprehensive than anything previously available, and many new facts and insights emerge. Thus it soon becomes clear that the time-honoured concept of a Highland Line, although useful at an abstract level, cannot lead to an adequate description of the "interface". Even to think in terms of a corridor of bilingualism - a sort of linguistic "no man's land" - does not do justice to the demonstrable inter-penetration of the Lowlands and Highlands, not to mention the political, economic and psychological factors which determined language access and choice for individuals at specific places and times. Again, a chapter on Gaelic in the Lowlands, for which such sources as the records of Highland Societies and Highland Churches have been utilized, breaks new ground and would clearly repay further investigation in its own right. Enhanced as it is by excellent documentation and indexing this book will deservedly enjoy the status of a reference work catering for a wide range of interests.

One serious limitation must be pointed out. Withers's sources - psychologically if not geographically - emanate almost exclusively from outside the Highlands and tend to represent a rather narrow spectrum of intellectual outlook and political opinion. The perspective obtained by sticking closely to these sources is by no means the only one that could be sought. Thus, for instance, a linguist's picture (of the sort exemplified by Kenneth Jackson's clas-

sic *Language and History in Early Britain*) would have a very different texture and emphases from the present work. So too would an account based on Gaelic literary sources, which contain much untapped material relevant to Withers's subject. The possibility of these alternative approaches does not *per se* detract from the validity or usefulness of the present one; but they will have to be taken into account before the history (as opposed to the "geography") of Gaelic in Scotland can be written.

While one cannot fault the work for keeping to its own beat, it is not easy to understand the omission of "geographical" data on the Gaelic side, such as the provenance of manuscript and early printed collections of Gaelic poetry and of individual items contained therein, or the subscription lists in many of the printed collections. Consideration of these and similar sources for Gaelic literary and literary activity could have imparted a roundedness which Withers's discussion sometimes lacks.

Concentrating on the testimony of the outside to the virtual exclusion of "inside" evidence can also affect the author's power to cope with bias in the former, or indeed to recognize it. Too often Withers appears to give literal credence to statements about the speaking of Gaelic made by parties with an interest in distorting the facts. Equally, it is difficult for him to form an independent opinion as to the merits of the views of Gaelic scholars, which are no more sacrosanct than those of others. And again, some questions left as unsolved puzzles by Withers would not detain a Highland historian for long.

In fairness, Withers is by no means alone in this weakness with regard to the treatment of Highland material. The explanation for this readiness to ignore or wish away one side of the evidence is to be found in the complex of myths and prejudices about things Gaelic, Celtic and Highland which Dr Withers himself discusses in the course of his exposition. It is ample testimony to their durability that a book in other ways so soundly based should in this respect perpetuate them.

The English Language in India (270pp. India: Oxford University Press. Rs100. 19561353 8) begins with Macaulay's Minute of 1835, which established English as an official language in India, then traces the evolution of a distinctive Indian English and examines the reasons which contributed to the retention of English after colonial independence.

JOHN CALDER'S LITERARY SPRING

Samuel Beckett's Collected Poems 1830-1978 updates previous volumes and reveals a major poet (£8.95). Other recent Becketts are *Worstward Ho* (£5.50 & £3.50 paper) and *Ill Seen & Said* (£2.95 paper), short novels of great poetic sensitivity; *Disjecta* (£4.95), a collection of his writings, reviews and fragments from university days onward. At 70 William Burroughs, *autour maudit*, has become one of the most honoured American writers (see below). *The Place of Dead Roads* (£9.95), explores the Wild West in a marvellous conflict of crime, against men of honour. Marguerite Duras in *Whole Days in the Trees*, her early stories (£3.95), writes of the experiences that create our obsessions and make us what we are. Eugene Ionesco's *The Hermit*, his only novel, shows how a legacy can transform a life (£3.95). *The Selected Poems of Pier Paolo Pasolini* (£8.95) reveal the Italian cineast as a major poet in a bilingual edition. Raymond Queneau, the funniest of French writers, in *Zazie in the Metro*

(£7.95 & £3.95) depicts a precocious little girl in Paris for the first time; in *We Always Treat Women Too Well* (£8.95 & £3.95) a highly-sexed patriotic English girl seduces and outwits the rebels in 1916 Dublin. Alan Robbe-Grille, in *Dime* (£2.95) and his latest, *Recollections of the Golden Triangle* (£3.95) brings his formidable imagination into the world of international terrorism and intrigue, and of vampiristic sadism. *The Use of Speech* is a brilliant discussion on the ways we use language and in particular certain words by Nathalie Sarraute (£3.95). Just republished, the masterpiece of Raymond Roussel, *Impressions of Africa and Locust Solus* (£A.£3.95), the precursor of surrealism. New talent: *Stories* by Erica Padrelli, a Swiss writer of great perception, whose novel comes to dramatic conclusions about why we always repeat our mistakes (£8.95 & £3.95) and *Album* by Sarah McCoy, whose brilliant high-falshion prose sees people and things in a new way (£3.50).

AUTHOR OF TODAY: WILLIAM BURROUGHS

Still one of the most discussed, and controversial of living novelists. Currently in print in Britain: *The Naked Lunch*: (1959) paperback edition containing the 1963-64 'Ugly correspondence' - (14 weeks in the TLS). £3.95. *The Wild Boys*: (1972) Latter day Bacchantes on the rampage. £3.95. *Extremities*: (1973) Shorter fictional prose. £3.95. *Port of Saints*: (1976) Familiar Burroughs characters in extreme situations. £3.95. *The Third Mind*: (1978) Burroughs on his methods and preoccupations. Written with Brian Gysin. £6.95. *At Pook Is Here*: (1980) Three fictional texts. £5.95 & £3.95. *Cities of the Red Night*: (1981) A 18th century narrative of 'good' pirates interlinked with a macabre modern thriller. £3.95. *The Place of Dead Roads*: (1984) Just out. See above £9.95.

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Itemizing the illuminations

J. J. G. Alexander

JOHN PLUMMER and GREGORY CLARK
The Last Flowering: French Painting in Manuscripts 1420-1530. From American collections.
122pp. Oxford University Press, £60.
019302624

THOMAS KREN (Editor)
Renaissance Painting in Manuscripts: Treasures from the British Library
210pp. British Library, £35.
0712310244

OTTO PÄCHT, ULRIKE JENNI and DAGMAR THOSS
Flämische Schule I: Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Schrift und Buchwesen des Mittelalters. Reihe I. Die illuminierten Handschriften und Inkunabeln der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek. Band 6
272pp. with separate volume of 9 colour and 221 black-and-white illustrations.
Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2.170sch.
370010553

Two ways, each with its own advantages and disadvantages, in which the study of illuminated manuscripts is promoted within curatorial institutions are exemplified in the works under review. Exhibitions give the public access to illuminated books, and it is right that they should be made available to more than a few specialists. The catalogues can be widely sold, which helps to keep their price down. But all this tends to work against the study of the manuscript book as a complex whole, historically produced, in so far as attention is focused on miniatures and primarily on questions of style, while codicological and textual issues and even subject-matter and purpose receive little or no mention.

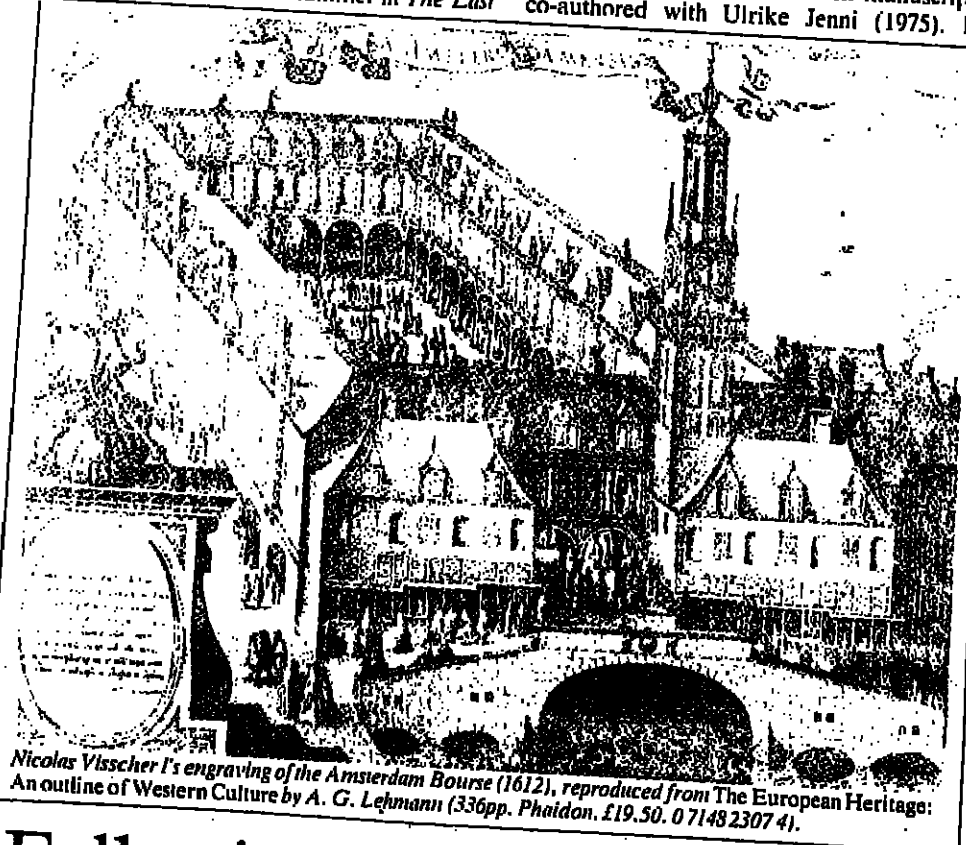
The Last Flowering is the catalogue of an exhibition of 132 items of French illumination from c 1420 to c 1530. John Plummer spent a number of years preparing the show, and he draws on American collections, both public and private, besides that of the Pierpont Morgan Library where the exhibition was held. The catalogue is a major contribution to scholarship, drawing a new map of a complex terrain and in the process adding new works to the oeuvre of artists already recognized, as well as isolating new personalities who will take their place in future literature. Thus, to give one example, in the section 1475-1500, artists operating in styles close to that of Jean Bourdichon are distinguished from each other, a suggestion is made that one should be identified with Jean Poyet and long lists of attributed books are included. The scale of this last exercise is clear from a glance at the list of manuscripts cited for comparison, printed in double column on eight pages. What is presented in the catalogue is, however, only the tip of an iceberg.

As a sounder guide to dating and placing illumination of that period, *The Last Flowering* will be an invaluable basis for other enterprises, such as the further investigation of interrelationships both political and cultural between France and Italy - two recent articles in *Simiolus* by Professor R. W. Scheller, on Charles VIII and Louis XII, have been indicative. An example of these interrelations is the problematic Master of the Della Rovere Missal, here classified, no doubt rightly, as a Frenchman imitating Italian styles rather than the other way round. But what features of his art appealed to Italian patrons, and how was it that there was an opening for him as an illuminator in Rome in the 1470s? Plummer does not mention what could be one of his earliest works in Italy: now in Turin, a copy of Sixtus IV's *Tractatus de sanguine domini*, printed in Rome in 1472, which, since it has the papal arms and is printed on vellum, is probably a presentation copy.

Cultural cross-currents also appear in *Renaissance Painting in Manuscripts*, the catalogue of an exhibition held first in the Getty Museum, Malibu, then in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, and to be seen in the British Library from May 25 to September 30. All the manuscripts included are from the British Library, ten examples of Flemish illumination, eight of Italian and seven of French. Ringing

in date from c 1475 to c 1560, all these manuscripts, in contrast to those of *The Last Flowering*, are known, and many have been studied over a long period by numerous scholars. Perhaps it would have been useful to include some less familiar material, for the British Library contains many still scarcely known treasures, and the Italian choices, particularly, seem rather unenterprising. Nevertheless the authors all have new contributions to make and manage to bring in a certain amount of new, or not often reproduced, material for comparison. Thomas Kren, for example, reviews the evidence for the identity of the Master of James IV of Scotland with Gerard Horen-bouts, and also adds to recent discussion of Marmion's work. Mark Evans questions the identification of the original commissioner of the Ghislieri Hours with Bonaparte and proposes instead his father, Virgilio; he also provides insights into links between monumental painters, for example Jacopo Bellini, and illuminators. Janet Backhouse supplies new observations to those of Plummer in *The Last*

Flowering on the group of manuscripts to which the Spitzer Hours belongs. Myra Orth writes on the works of Godefroy de Batavia. One theme of *Renaissance Painting in Manuscripts* is the relationship between miniature painters of that date and other artists, especially panel painters. The third catalogue, *Flämische Schule I*, which describes a portion of the illuminated manuscripts of the Austrian National Library, also is informative on this process. It is, however, not an exhibition catalogue but a library one, with proper codicological and palaeographical details. The textual contents are analysed and all miniatures and decoration are described and discussed. The catalogue in fact continues the series of fourteen volumes written by H. J. Hermann and published between 1923 and 1938. When Otto Pächt returned to Vienna in 1963 he revived the project and completed Hermann's catalogues of the French manuscripts by two volumes co-authored with Dagmar Thoss (1947, 1977), and of the Dutch manuscripts, co-authored with Ulrike Jenni (1975). Dr



Nicolas Visscher's engraving of the Amsterdam Bourse (1612), reproduced from *The European Heritage: An outline of Western Culture* by A. G. Lehmann (336pp. Phaidon, £19.50, 0714823074).

Following the exhibition

John Nash

JEFFREY CHIPPSAITH
Nuremberg: A Renaissance city, 1500-1618
322pp. with 306 black-and-white illustrations
University of Texas Press, £38.25.
0292755279

ELLEN S. JACOBOWITZ and STEPHANIE LOEB
STEPANAK
The Prints of Lucas van Leyden and His Contemporaries
336pp. with black-and-white illustrations.
National Gallery of Art, Washington.
Guildford: Princeton University Press, £56.40.
0691038538

The blurbs of these massive, expensive volumes from university presses adopt the same tone: one 'remarkably comprehensive' volume is the first English-language examination of Nuremberg at its 'creative peak'; the other is 'the first extensive work in English on the graphics of Lucas van Leyden'. What the blurbs do not state conspicuously (and in the latter case not at all) is that these tomes are catalogues of past exhibitions.

It is a trivial sleight, but it overwrites conflicts of purpose and function inherent in this flourishing genre - the hypertrophied scholarly 'permanent record' of an ephemeral exhibition. These wrist-wrecking memorial slabs were never designed to be carried round in actual exhibition: their fully-annotated hulk is intended for the academic library. Was the exhibition itself a pretext for the published text? But the examples and contingencies of exhibitions - availability of objects, costs of transport and insurance, size of gallery and

(not least pressing) printing deadlines all are in odds with the achievement of a well-weighted dissertation. Of the same species, these specimens are very different individuals.

The Nuremberg exhibition was literally an academic exercise. Conceived to celebrate the centennial of the University of Texas and its many alumni of German descent, it did not seek rare objects in far places. Of its 213 exhibits, 155 were prints and drawings. Fifty-four were small bronzes and other metal work and only four were paintings; and the majority (189) were borrowed from North American collections with twenty more from Nuremberg itself. This wide range of works by forty-six diverse artists offered rich material evidence of life and values in sixteenth-century Nuremberg: the task of the catalogue was to interpret its significance. And for that the catalogue format proves 'highly effective' just because it takes each piece individually and establishes its context.

But though the entries offer a vivid collage of events and institutions, the lengthy introduction fails to establish an appropriate setting. It is almost entirely a conventional art-historical recital of categories and developments of style. Curiously, it is the catalogue and its text, not the introduction, that fulfils the promise of the volume's title.

Despite its handsome appearance, the Lucas van Leyden volume is a most unsatisfactory hybrid. Published by two institutions, the work of two organizers, it has identity problems. The interior publishing date identifies it as the catalogue of a loan exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, Washington; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, held last year; it was a rare display of ninety-eight prints and two drawings by Lucas, and forty-one prints by thirteen con-

temporaries. In the words of one of the organizers, Ellen Jacobowitz, 'a primary reason for this exhibition is the assessment of the relative value of the prints'. In her catalogue entries Jacobowitz pays scrupulous attention to specific features of the individual exhibit. Of one exhibit (B. 152, loaned from the Petit Palais, Paris) she notes:

This impression is poorly printed in a small spot in the upper left corner, and it looks as if it may have been pressed in a portfolio for years, yet it is remarkably rich and clear, showing several signs of being an early pull.

No doubt many visitors to the exhibition found these observations illuminating. The elegant binding and dustcover of the review copy identify the volume as a Princeton publication and 'the standard reference work on the prints of van Leyden for many years to come'. But this volume fails as an *oeuvre* catalogue on the most elementary grounds: it is not complete and no attempt has been made to acknowledge the scale of its omissions. There is no concordance with earlier *oeuvre* catalogues and no index.

Of the two authors, Stephanie Stepanak provides an 8000-word introduction and other essay-length catalogue entries on the woodcuts that add up to a comprehensive authoritative introduction to Lucas's work in the medium and the problems of attribution. Jacobowitz's entries on the engravings are less satisfactory. In addition to her observations on the physical condition of the exhibited impression she provides useful, annotated summaries of current scholarship. (The most perceptive observations are credited to Jane Hutchinson.) Her recapitulations of traditional subjects are characteristic: 'Lucrécia was a Roman noblewoman who was coerced into sexual relations and who then took her own life'.

Exhibition catalogues, even such excellent and well researched ones as *The Last Flowering* and *Renaissance Painting in Manuscripts*, are no substitute for in-depth catalogues of the Vienna model; it is good that similar catalogues are beginning to appear in Paris and Munich.

O'O's twin-kin

Patrick Lindsay Bowles

JEAN-LOUIS BAGHIO'O
The Blue Flame-Tree
142pp. Manchester: Carcanet, £7.95.
0856354708

Big black pirates with gleaming cutlasses who skin white slave traders alive and make them into trousers; a little Negress who lops off pale pink European ears and strings them into a necklace; the simultaneous orgasm of a wild mulatto red head with her twin Negro sons during a ritual dance; the torturing of a man who, placed astride a blade, is gradually sliced in two; Choutoumounou, one of the twins, ejaculating gratefully on to the back of a female adult dolphin who has saved him from certain death; the playing out of the infantile fantasy of perfect retribution, where wrongdoers have a tooth or two yanked out with a pair of blacksmith's tongs and evil-doers get their eyes poked out with a switch - all of this may make *The Blue Flame-Tree* sound like an ideal children's book, meaning one the children would like to get their hands on. Sadly, this rather earnestly mythic performance is far more dreary than such juicy passages suggest.

M Baghio'o's endearingly egocentric historical fantasy, which first appeared in 1973 and was awarded the Prix des Caraïbes the same year, is set in Guadeloupe; it traces the fortunes of several generations of slaves and ex-slaves from the seventeenth century through the abolition of slavery in 1848 and down to the close of the Great War. All are descendants of the great, Joycean-sounding folk-hero O'O, born, as we are none too helpfully informed, in either 1543 or 1679 or perhaps neither. Based on West Indian legends and such insurrectionists as Delgrès, O'O the Corsair, the very incarnation of black mischief and a very poor sport indeed about the slave trade, spawns an illustrious if troublesome progeny which includes twins in every generation. The title refers to the magical transformation of a red-flowered flame-tree, which turns blue to commemorate the social miracle of emancipation and the subsequent possibility of intermarriage among the French colonial masters and their former belongings.

Readers with a passion for *Stoffgeschichte* and parallel-drawing will be kept busy with the motifs of mutilation, metamorphosis, black and white colour symbolism, wild men, noble

savages, much implicit 'et leges et sceptrum' business, miscegenation, aquatic imagery and twins. (If Michel Tournier's *Les Mémoires* leaps to mind, S.E.K. Mqhayi's 1914 Xhosa classic *The Twins on Trial*, which has the whole lot plus religion, should not be forgotten). Not even such a reader, however, will necessarily find Baghio'o's glove-puppet allegorizing wholly successful. The beasty, crippled Professor of False Sciences, the batty ecclesiastical non sequiturs defending the chain of being, and the revenge play dichotomies of culture and innocence paraded here are caricatured but hardly flattened. Despite much painstaking chatter concerning genealogical circuitry, relationships between characters - and the same may be said of the transitions between the book's sixteen parts - are not all that clear. Save for a few bright flashes (Martinique from a distance 'looks like a dark mass, a sheet of paper vigorously scrunched up and thrown on to a billiard-table'), the writing is undistinguished. However worthwhile the author's ambition of playing ventriloquist to the lost *auricle* of French Creole culture, one comes away with the impression of little more than a ragbag.

In all fairness, much that seems unsatisfactory in this novel derives from the shortcomings of the translation, which suffers from a classic over-educated foreigner's speech-defect. Adverbs frequently seem club-footed or bashful, pseudo-tenses crop up here and there, and there are a handful of untranslated items, notably of phonetic symbolism. English readers may, without the benefit of accompanying cartoon drawings, wonder just what is going on when they read 'Plouff!', 'A-hi-hu! ahii...!', 'floo', 'baoum', or 'bandambangue'. At one point Pampon, whose twin brother we have already seen in that Flipper Meets Madoror episode, makes love, O mitigated pleasure, to a beach; what in the original reads at best like a bit of contrived kinkiness fares even worse in translation. 'Singing sun! What a strange and powerful music came from seventh heaven then with its unnumbered stars beyond the firmament. Through such vast disturbance, the echoes of sounds and lights vibrate. Everywhere gold, incense, myrrh was flowering.' The vast disturbance vibrating in this sub-Lawrentian periphrasis for orgasm is the French language. An 'ours mal léché', however disgusting-sounding in French, is not 'an ill-digested bear', and 'Séculaire' does not mean 'secular'.

Refining the fire

Robin Buss

ANDRÉ PÉYRE DE MANDIARGUES
Le Deuil des roses: nouvelles
184pp. Paris: Gallimard, 62fr.

The third of these stories is inscribed 'à la mémoire de Junichiro Tanizaki', just as one of Mandiargues's earlier collections was dedicated 'aux mânes de Mishima'; as these names suggest, there is an element of Japanese eroticism, which it would be wrong to dismiss as merely sadistic in the usual sense, in much of Mandiargues's work. In the title story, for example, the central character finds himself at the mercy of four Japanese girls who take him to witness the ritual death of their mistress: the death is to be voluntarily accepted and not violent, but constitutes a spectacle which requires a witness with the refinement to appreciate this singular, unpredictable and possibly dangerous experience. If he shows himself worthy of it, there may be a reward. Léon's passive aestheticism, and Mandiargues's meticulous, slightly precious account of his feelings and the events of the story, make its intentions and its literary antecedents plain.

To evoke the violent forces that can be unleashed by sexual passion, and the association of sex and death, the writer can show them, as Zola did in *La Bête humaine*, as something inherent in human nature but kept in check, for the most part, by civilized taboos; or else, like Mandiargues, as a feature of the sexual act itself, a tribute to his art. But their decadence is closer to Beardsley than to Sade, more a matter of style than of eccentricity.

Déclassé desire

Peter Hainsworth

DARIO BELLEZZA
Turbamento
147pp. Milan: Mondadori, L.12.500.

Dario Bellezza's protagonist and spokesperson in his latest novel is a nameless man-woman, grammatically feminine but given to the grossest of camp idioms. Her story, such as it is, is simple. Having failed as a poetess, she opens in Rome a brothel which caters for whores and clients of both sexes. When two of her helpers turn violent, she retreats to the quiet of a castle in Lucania. There she finds more wholesome sex with the peasant boys, and the chance to write up her Roman experiences - what we have in fact been reading as the first two parts of the book. But the escape is illusory: her writing dissolves into fragments, footnotes, a diary. The last scene is the reappearance of one of her cronies or enemies, come to bring her back to a reality to which she is in fact addicted.

To reveal what happens is to let out no secrets of importance. Bellezza is barely interested in narrative. Rather he is interested in the interplay between what he calls *quotidianità*, or day-to-dayness, and writing. The day-to-dayness in question is obviously of the most degraded kind. The narrator-protagonist lives not only in the midst of prostitution but among drugs, violence and erotomania, a world in which the heroines are other figures like herself, with outlandish names (la Ghisolfia, L'Aida, la Ferouche and so on), vast sexual appetites, compelling needs for cash and the most vicious, scabrous tongues. It is a closed, *déclassé* world on the fringes of Roman society, drifting towards its destruction, completely without hope or any other illusion, yet in some way still desirous of happiness and love.

Here the demented, desperate writer can

Scarf-love

Isabel Quigley

GIOVANNI ARPINO
La sposa segreta
194pp. Milan: Garzanti, L.16.000.

Mother and adult son sharing a flat and (to some extent) a life are an anachronism, objects of derision or suspicion. At twenty-seven, Carlo has gone to earth, burrowed into a womb of darkness and electronic noise. Making soundtracks for films and television, 'pale as a potato in the cellar', he spends night and day playing, replaying, splicing, overlapping and knitting up booms, roars, storms, jungle noises, music. Now and then he opens his door an inch to pass the time of day (or night) and Paola, oddly unoccupied, feverishly makes coffee. Friendly but obsessed, Carlo is hardly companionable, though the pair communicate with a fair degree of understanding in cinema-talk - as in the Far West (his spiritual country), or thrillers (her). Suddenly Paola sees the solution: Carlo must marry, and since he never goes out she must find him a wife.

Hardly a modern theme; and her secret search, as eager and fervid as her coffee-making, leaves her limp and discouraged. From anorexic and suicidal to pregnant, militant and self-absorbed, the girls spurn her efforts to sell Carlo (with his molting eyes and Far West jokes), who in any case has given no clue to his taste in women. Then a tardily acknowledged preference for 'windy' hair - thick, flowing, tumbling, sweepable if not necessarily wind-swept - sends Paola off to her disagreeable Aunt Fedora's seaside flat to meet a lovely dog-walker called Margherita, whose hair is a mystery since for evening outings with Bongo she wears a headscarf. Enter Mario, who falls for Paola across the local restaurant and on her behalf takes off to sell Carlo the idea of Margherita (whose hang-up about men and marriage becomes all too understandable). When Paola tries to discover what's happening, the telephone rings and rings in the empty flat. Anguish and speculation. Where is Carlo, eventually recording? His Mario retreated

make a stand. For this world is felt by Bellezza to be real in a way that bourgeois civilization is not, or at least it is less unreal. His logic seems to be that, divested of their familiar, euphemistic coatings, human needs and desires may take refuge in other, assumed languages and identities; but the open display of falseness allows the chance of challenging, if not of laying bare, the obscure powers, or Power, of which humanity is the victim.

In a partly comic and surreal way Bellezza makes the challenge explicitly that of poetry. The failed poetess has Rimbaud staying in her flat writing *Une saison en enfer*; Leopardi, a suffering, noble, homosexual Leopardi, comes on a visit from Naples; Cavafy and Foscolo are somewhere in the background. Other figures amongst the men-women may well be jokey, rather hitchy representations of living Italian writers. Above all there is the dead Olocausta, poet, novelist, film-maker and subversive, whom the protagonist makes the addressee of everything she writes. Bellezza was Pasolini's friend and secretary. He has already written about him in *Monte di Pasolini* (1977), and now in *Turbamento* he turns to him again and tries to assess Pasolini's legacy to himself and to others, not in order to lay his ghost, but in order to continue his revolt in what appear to be more difficult times. Together Olocausta and the other dead poets furnish support and solidarity. Through them Bellezza is able to recognize his own position as latecomer and *confrère*, and to project himself as one keeping up a grandly romantic struggle for affirmation in an ostensibly negative world.

Turbamento is not an obviously likeable book, and some of those who do like it may well take their pleasure mostly in a form of linguistic outrage that has a long pedigree in Italy. But it confronts large issues and its raw, strident violence is unusual in Italian fiction. Disturbance may be what it is about: it is also its effect.

his involvement and bolted? Then, with massive hangovers which explain everything (their instant sympathy, Carlo's emergence from the womb), the two men prepare to meet their two women. Scarless, Margherita proves to have the right hair (even the unpromising *den ex machina*, Aunt Fedora, approves Paola's choice), and Paola, so dingy in her own estimation, in Mario's is 'luminous'.

Courtship at one remove is a risky business these days, when parental preference is hardly likely to mean much, and the result of bringing the two young people together is not revealed. Only implied in the almost masquerade atmosphere of fulfillment in which the novel ends, Arpino writes with wit and warmth; he manages to be at once funny and sad, to achieve atmosphere (of desolation, quarrelsomeness or quiet pleasure), then suddenly to spice the whole thing with a verbal shock. His style - readable and relaxed - has just the right degree of surprise and stimulus. One or two tricks (or almost tricks), such as putting the subject at the end of a sentence ('Si sentiva felice e senza alcuna ragione, Paola'), are a bit over-used, but the dialogue (and most of the book consists of dialogue, loosely stitched together by a thread of narrative and the minimum of description) is just right - elliptical, credible, very amusing, and with digressions to cherish, like Aunt Fedora's view of Churchill's funeral.

Arpino has won some of the main Italian literary prizes, including the Sirena and the Campiello; he is a playwright, sports-writer and, perhaps most importantly in considering this novel, biographer of Italy's most popular writer of adventure stories, Salgari. Pop culture at all levels and in all kinds of places (Hollywood in particular) clearly has an influence on everything he looks at, with a connecting, metaphorical effect that makes Paola's exclusion from her son's electronic world suggest her exclusion from other mainstream modern doings, even from life itself. His world is full of emblems cunningly and unaffectedly hidden, sometimes suggesting cultural loneliness and alienation, and at others (in films and thrillers and the pop world of television) cultural over-happings, cheerfully world-wide.

Philip Alexander

MICHAEL GRANT
The History of Ancient Israel
317pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £16.50.
0297783661

TESSARAJAK
Josephus: The historian and his society
245pp. Duckworth. £19.50.
0715615025

Michael Grant is by training a classicist whose major contribution to pure scholarship lies in the field of Roman numismatics and Roman history. He is also known as a popularizer who has written engagingly for non-specialists on various aspects of Greek and Roman civilization. His latest venture is a full-blown history of the Jews from Patriarchal times (early second millennium BC) down to the end of the first Jewish war against Rome in AD 74. Grant already has several books on Jewish history to his credit – notably *The Jews in the Roman World and Herod the Great* – but the present work marks a departure into new territory, away from the Greco-Roman world he knows so well, deep into the ancient Near East, the world of the early Semites. His basic plan is quite simple: having sketched in the background to ancient Israelite history (the geography of Canaan, the cultures and peoples of the Fertile Crescent), he proceeds to offer, in approved chronological order, a summary of the Old Testament and inter-testamental Jewish literature, interlarded with comments in which he records some of the results of modern academic study of the texts. He is concerned not just with literary analysis, but laudably brings archaeological discovery constantly to bear on the texts. This approach has much to commend it, as has Grant's general style, which is, characteristically, readable and "unfussy".

However, when all is said and done, it is hard to see for whom this book was written, or what purpose it serves. Grant is in no sense an expert in this field. The whole work is highly derivative, its sources are obvious to the well-informed. Specialists will find the book intensely irritating. They will be nagged by the suspicion that Grant is always writing at the limits of his knowledge, and at many points only just grasping the problems and issues. The effect is like reading an undergraduate essay. Of course Grant is more experienced than the average undergraduate, writes better and conceals his deficiencies more skilfully, but basically he has done what undergraduates are expected to do – writing up a subject in a short space of time and present a reasonably competent summary of it. He perpetrates few outright howlers, but the book is full of curious, out-of-focus remarks which betray an author not fully in command of his material. His scattered comments on Hebrew leave much to be desired and cast grave doubts on his competence in that language.

If the work cannot be defended as pure scholarship, it is equally hard to justify it as popularization. There is a time and a place for what the French call *vulgarisation*, but it should be performed by someone who has some pretensions to be a master of the subject. The general reading public has surely the right to expect this. Contrary to what many publishers think, state-of-the-art summaries require more not less knowledge of a field, and tax an author's competence more than a work of technical scholarship in his narrow field of specialization. They require more than a ready pen and the ability to digest quantities of secondary literature. In time-honoured fashion the publisher claims that Grant's book "fills a notable need". It most certainly does not. A number of histories of ancient Israel (both technical and non-technical) are readily available, written by people better qualified to speak on the subject than Michael Grant. The general reader would be well-advised to stick to such old favourites as Bright and Herrmann, both of whom say everything Grant says – more accurately and authoritatively.

Tessa Rajak's *Josephus* is a very different kind of book, born as it is out of profound knowledge and independent thought. Though it calls for sustained, attentive reading, it is notably free from academic jargon, and should, with a bit of effort, prove accessible to general readers. Its vigorous, incisive style sus-

tains the interest through the subtle twists of the argument.

Flavius Josephus is the historian of the great Jewish war against Rome which broke out in AD 66 and ended with the mass suicide of the *Sicarii* at Masada in AD 74. His writings "constitute our only continuous source for the history of Palestine in the time of the Herods and the Roman procurators, of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the formation of the oral tradition on which Rabbinic Judaism would be based, of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ". In other words he is our main source for one of the great turning-points of human history.

Rajak does not simply offer an introduction to Josephus – an update of St John Thackeray's classic *Josephus: The Man and the Historian* (1929). True, anyone interested in the meagre facts of Josephus' life, the chronology of his writings, the lost Aramaic account of the war, the "assistant theory" and so on, will find here the facts and the theories. But to provide such information is not Rajak's major aim. She is concerned, first to assess Josephus' reliability as a historian, and second, through detailed analysis of this problem, to suggest a fresh interpretation of the causes and course of the great rebellion. What emerges is a vivid picture of a society in the throes of violent, revolutionary change, of one man's place in that society and his perception of events.

Josephus participated in the revolt from start to finish, and was uniquely placed to see it from both the Roman and the Jewish sides. But he played a highly dubious, ambivalent role. He was appointed commander of the Jewish forces in Galilee, but having surrendered to the Romans at Jotapata, he went over to their side and served them till the end of the war – served them so well, indeed, that he was granted Roman citizenship, and spent the second half of his life, comfortably, in Rome, enjoying considerable imperial patronage. Even before the débâcle of Jotapata the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem had their doubts about him and tried to strip him of his command. In his own lifetime he was forced hotly to defend his war record, and to modern readers he often comes across as a shifty, enigmatic character, at best a time-server, at worst a Quisling. Clearly he had an axe to grind, and it is hardly surprising that scholars today tend to despair of his objectivity. Rajak, however, believes that Josephus' shortcomings as a historian are not as serious as has often been supposed. If we handle him properly his bias can be neutralized. "We are not thrown back on the grim choice, either of reproducing Josephus' story as it stands, with varying degrees of credulity, or of dismissing it in its entirety." Internal contradictions in his works (eg. between the *Vita* and the *Bellum*) have been exaggerated. There is no real foundation for the oft-repeated charge that Josephus was just a propaganda hack for the Flavians.

The fundamental problem which Rajak has to address is this: Since Josephus is our only source for most of the events he describes, how can we cross-check his story? Her solution is clear and simple: Josephus' account of the causes and course of the revolt is broadly coherent; it is intrinsically believable and above all conforms to known social and historical patterns. In particular she tries to show that Josephus' picture of the conflict conforms well to the anatomy of revolution as analysed by Crane Brinton and others.

The historical logic of Josephus' story will go a good way towards establishing his credibility, at least with regard to the principal actions and events. For whilst it would be patently improper to say of history, as E. M. Foster did of poetry, that "it is true, it hangs together", there is a more limited assertion which may be made: if we find no internal grounds for impugning the historian's story, then, in the absence of evidence from the outside, it must have a prima facie claim on our belief. And although a comparison with the pattern of other revolutions is not proof of anything (still less a source of supply for missing facts), it does help us to assess the story put before us by Josephus.

It is certainly not going to be easy to dismiss the picture which Rajak has so skilfully drawn out of Josephus. Of course, historical analogy is a dangerous tool, but she uses it deftly and only rarely forces the parallels. Her broad socio-economic perspectives illuminate the issues, and give depth and modernity to her analysis. This is unquestionably a splendid piece of work, a major contribution to the study of Josephus and his times.



Wooden model servants making bread. Asyut, Middle Kingdom, c 2000 BC: reproduced from *Egyptian Mummies* by Carol Andrews (72pp. British Museum Publications. £4.95. 07141 20278).

The Great Greek Show

John Ray

E. E. RICE
The Grand Procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus
225pp. Oxford University Press. £17.50.
0198147201

When Alexander entered Persepolis early in 330 BC, he found the small change of the Persian king, the sum left over after the entire Empire had been on a war footing for the past four years. According to one estimate, it was the equivalent of Periclean Athens' annual income for about five centuries. Larger sums fell into Alexander's hands elsewhere. Before this, Greek genius had flourished on a shoestring; but the Greeks had few qualms about easy money, and no objections to operating on a global scale. Alexandria, the conqueror's most inspired foundation and unintentional burial-place, with Egypt, potentially the richest hinterland of all, was to be the setting for the Hellenistic experiment *par excellence*. The Ptolemies, with their apparently limitless resources, set about applying Greek discoveries to a conquered nation, conveniently giving the screw an extra twist to drive out the feeling of shared humanity which had been the redeeming quality of Pharaonic Egypt.

In so doing they placed Greek civilization on a national, rather than a civic basis, and it is in this context that we must imagine a spectacle such as the grand festival of Ptolemy II. The event seems to have been marked by an exquisite understatement. If the casual spectator had rubbed his eyes for a moment he might have missed the clockwork statue of Nysa standing up and pouring automatic libations, or the golden phallus, 180 feet long, with a large star at one end, but he would probably have noticed some of the 81,000 soldiers, or the 500 men pulling an artificial cave from which milk, wine and pigeons cascaded forth. The message was clear: "Welcome to Egypt, now under entirely new management but still the home of the miraculous, and compare the exploits of Dionysus, who civilized the ends of the earth, with those of Alexander, our *genius loci*, now incarnated in the ruling house." At this point the purist throws up his hands at the vulgarity of it all, but never stops to ask what an exhibition of the first-rate would have looked like, or whether it would have worked. A May Day parade is bound to be sensationalist.

The festival was described by Callimachus of Rhodes, who E. E. Rice convincingly argues was a near contemporary, but his account is preserved only by the rambling Athenaeus of Naucratis, who wrote about 500 years later, and himself survives in an edited form. In general, the author accepts Athenaeus'ures, probably rightly, but what of anachronisms and misunderstandings? These are not really discussed. A superficial reading of the text, for example, suggests that both morning and evening star appeared on the same day, which is impossible; Athenaeus is either being poetic, or romanticizing, and it is arguable that he sometimes misunderstood his source.

There is some weak organization in Dr Rice's book. A literal commentary on the text is followed by a discussion of the sources' reliability and purpose, although it would be more natural to reverse this order. We do not really need three discussions about the date of the procession in different places, well handled though they are. The book is still a thesis, with all facts equally documented and constant cross-referencing, when it could have been a publication. The state barge of Ptolemy IV makes several dazzling appearances, but it is some while before the reason for this becomes apparent (the study by Günther Grimm could surely have been incorporated more). Other sections of the book, however, are models of their kind – the discussion of Dodona and contemporary politics on pages 129-30, and the account of Alexandrian historiography on pp 176-9 – and one is constantly impressed by the encyclopedic knowledge, whether of ostrich-racing, metal-working, or recondite mythology.

More puzzling is the very patchy attention Rice gives to the Egyptian background. In the conclusion, it is hinted that the whole procession may have meant much to a native audience, but the implications of this are never brought out. Indeed, it cannot have failed to do so. This ignorance is regular among classicists, and is almost entirely the fault of Egyptologists, although it is sad to see "Pharaoh" misspelled on p.181. The author knows about third-cults, but not that persea was a symbol of coronation; and about Merottic elephants and Pharaonic boat-building, but not camels or antelopes; and the remarkable tomb of Pshe-siris deserves much more than relegation to a footnote.

What the author does well is to radiate from the central theme, giving descriptive weight to every item. What it would be good to see has do is to take a mental step backwards, and see the whole into perspective – the cult of the ruler, and the importance of Alexandria as a great alternative focus for Greek life in a greatly changed world, possibly on the lines of the recent study by Roger Bagnall. I hope that he will feel encouraged to do this; the result will certainly be worth reading.

Savaging sacred cows

Martin Lynn

ELIZABETH ISICHEI
A History of Nigeria
with a contribution by Peter Uche Isichei
517pp. Longman. £19.95 (paperback, £7.95).
0582643317

For too long African historiography has been a political battleground. At one time, as is well known, the general view of the history of Africa was essentially a "colonial" one, characterized by stereotypes that implicitly or explicitly justified colonial rule. Pre-colonial Africa – in Hugh Trevor-Roper's now hackneyed phrase that African historians still love periodically to flagellate themselves with – was seen as being inhabited by "barbarous tribes" who were eventually to be overtaken by the progress brought by colonial rule. This view came to be challenged from the late 1950s onwards by a "nationalist" historiography determined to redraw the picture historians held of the African past. This approach, implicitly attempting to justify the new nation states of Africa, stressed the truly African dimension to Africa's history and the remarkable achievements of pre-colonial African society. The danger here, however, was that taken too far, as it sometimes was, this "nationalist" historiography could be as romanticized as the "colonial" historiography it replaced, stressing an idyllic "Merrie Africa" that existed before the devastation brought by the "barbarous tribes" of Europe.

Most historians of Africa found themselves drawn, to a greater or lesser extent, to one or other of these camps. More recently, however, a position that can perhaps be termed "post-nationalist" has emerged, and African historiography has begun to leave behind the arid

divisions of the recent past. Elizabeth Isichei's *History of Nigeria* is part of this process and her book is a considerable achievement, treating the Nigerian past in a highly original, readable and, above all, dispassionate manner. More than that, her book represents a genuinely new approach to Nigerian history, by developing, for the first time, a thematic view of the country's past.

Instead of the conventional approach to Nigeria's history which, put crudely, begins with the sculptures of Nok, moves through surveys of Ife and Benin, touches briefly on Igboiland, then examines the great states of Hausaland and Borno, the impact of Islam, the slave trade, the nineteenth-century jihad and the transition to legitimate commerce, before concluding with colonial conquest and finally the winning of independence, we are offered here an entirely different perspective. Mrs Isichei emphasizes instead themes such as economic production, trade, climatic change, urban planning, religion, literacy, medicine, art and so forth, in an attempt to see the past in something approaching its totality. Thus, the neglect of Nigerian architecture by historians, she claims, "is a striking example of the way in which our perception of the total human past is constricted by the academic specialisation of the observer". Similarly, the often ignored areas of middle Nigeria or the south-east are given detailed attention. The history of Kontagora or the Chamba, of the small-scale states of Igboiland or the Jos plateau, is seen in this approach to be as important as that of the more well-known Kano or Katsina. This represents an important corrective and it brings out interesting new facets of Nigeria's history. The walls of Benin, for example, the world's largest ancient monument – being longer than the Great Wall of China – take their place in this study alongside the better-known achieve-

ments of Nigerian art and archaeology.

There is much more to this book than simply its thematic approach to the past. What makes Isichei's approach so stimulating is the central thesis she interweaves through her themes. On one level this is a straightforward attempt to retail Nigerian history from a Nigerian angle. Instead of a concentration on the activities of, say, Sir George Goldie on the Niger in the 1890s, we read of the attitudes to him of the people he conquered – for example the Brassmen's complaint to MacDonald in 1895 that "the ill-treatments of the Niger Company is very bad. They said that Brassmen should eat dust. According to their saying, we see truly that we eat the dusts." Isichei's collection of such reactions brings out an interesting side to colonial conquest, as in the comment of the Birom of the Jos plateau that, "when the Europeans first came, we only heard that some white things have come... when we saw them, we were afraid because we have never seen white human beings... To take them as animals was also strange because we have never seen animals that walk on two legs like us." Similarly, the African view of colonial rule thereafter can be seen in the simple summary by one Igbo village group of the events of its history under the British as "a series of public disasters of great magnitude... The coming of the Government in the person of a white man nicknamed Oikpu, the Destroyer... The Influenza (1919)... Railway Construction Labour (1921)... The Ochiama Patrol (1924)... Taxation (1928)".

Isichei goes beyond this, however, and it is here that the true value of her view of Nigerian history lies. Her central thesis is the importance of the division between rich and poor in Nigeria, an approach that gives her a distinctly unromantic view of Nigerian history. In pre-colonial Nigeria, she argues, the differentiation between ruler and ruled grew, and elite rule became in places increasingly oppressive. The slave trade, for example, represents to Isichei "an exploitative alliance between... rulers, merchants and military aristocracy...".

Among the matrikin

Marion Johnson

CHRISTINE OKALI
Cocoa and Kinship in Ghana: The Matrilineal Akan of Ghana
179pp. Kegan Paul International. Paperback, £9.95.
0710300417

Modernization in Africa, including cash-crop farming, favours individual enterprise at the expense of extended families and corporate descent groups; matrilineages are particularly vulnerable. This is the accepted view (to which Christine Okali herself subscribed in the past). In *Cocoa and Kinship in Ghana* she takes a close look at this and other kinship questions among two groups of matrilineal Akan farmers from Ghana – 228 persons engaged in cocoa farming at Akokoaso, a cocoa village first studied in 1933, and eighty-seven at Dominase, still a pioneer cocoa village at the time of her field-work in the early 1970s. Much of the book is based on a very detailed study of fifteen of the Dominase farmers. "As one turns to quantification", she declares, "the breadth of one's view must narrow as depth is substituted for it." While a good deal that is interesting emerges from these case studies, statisticians may doubt whether 315 is an adequate sample on which to base generalizations about some 3,000,000 Akan.

The detailed information from these farmers is presented in over fifty tables which analyse residence patterns, labour, farm ownership and acquisition, returns to investment of labour, etc., as between "citizens" and "strangers", men and women, wives and offspring, and matrikin: with such small numbers, however, the breakdown sometimes results in minute categories, and meaningless percentages. The study is broadened by a summary of 122 court cases involving related persons, concerning cocoa farms, and a survey of some sixty-ax Ashanti farmers from Government cocoa schemes.

with an external exploiter to prey on the peasant population", a view which is fundamental to her whole approach. This perception, with its clear echoes of Fanon's critique of post-colonial Africa, she also applies to colonial rule, whose chief impact she takes to be its increase in the distance between rich and poor. Equally, she is not afraid to examine independent Nigeria in these terms. Independence, she says, was an era of "democracy for a few rich Nigerians", going on to quote one critic's complaint of "ten wasted years of planlessness, incompetence, inefficiency, greed, corruption, avarice and gross disregard for the interests of the common man".

All of this makes for a genuinely original treatment of Nigeria's history that savages many sacred cows. Yet problems remain. Her thematic approach, while it helps solve some problems of historical analysis, inevitably causes others. This can be seen in her tendency towards the "card index" method for the presentation of material, which she criticizes in others, and a tendency, particularly apparent in the chapters on economics, to read back from the present ethnographic situation – a difficulty recognized but not entirely resolved by Isichei. Probably unresolvable is a further problem, namely the question of the historical unity of pre-colonial Nigeria, which seems to throw doubt on the validity of books such as this; Isichei wrestles with this subject but never convincingly settles it.

None the less this is an illuminating way of looking at Nigeria's past, and its strength lies in the understanding it gives of Nigeria's present. It is refreshing to come across a history book that has a place for the post-war Lagos band-leader Bobby Benson, and the Oshogbo artist Twins Seven Seven, as well as the conventional figures of Nigerian history such as Alafin Abiodun and Emir Masaba. Moreover, given recent events in Nigeria, one can only muse wryly at the optimistic hope of one newspaper after the first of the 1966 coups, that "Bribe? E Done Die. Chop-Chop-E No dey".

In the analysis of residence patterns, it emerges only casually that Akan husbands and wives do not normally reside together. (M. J. Field's study of Abenase, adjacent to Akokoaso, in *Akin Kotoku* – not cited by the author – gives details of very various residence patterns there.) Among the cocoa farmers, co-residence is common, particularly among strangers (who have no kin in the neighbourhood). Many compound heads in Akokoaso are women, either widows or no longer married (the excess of women there is not explained – presumably many men are employed elsewhere). Most young women work on their husbands' farms, frequently engaged in food-farming, a traditional occupation of Akan wives. Older women, particularly citizens, can become farm owners by inheritance, gift, or purchase.

Matrilineages are shown to be important for the handful of successful migrant farmers at Dominase, both for help in the establishment of their farms (including the use of proceeds of inherited farms which would, under Akan law, become lineage property), and also in the help given to members of the matrilineage (as well as to wives and children) in establishing their own farms. The use of matrikin as labour, in addition to that of wives, seems less successful, confirming, as did the court cases, accepted views of tensions between uncles and sisters' sons, as well as between offspring and matrikin.

Cocoa farmers, it seems, may change their habits in changed circumstances, without necessarily changing their value-systems, retaining matrilineal links and reverting to custom in their home-towns. There is more life in the matrilineage than was once thought – at least in Akokoaso and Dominase.

Erica Rowell worked as secretary to Kwame Nkrumah from 1955 until he was removed from power in February 1966. She writes about her experiences in *Private Secretary (Female)* Gold Coast (288pp. C. Hurst & Co. £8.95. 09058389).

in search of the proletarians

Patrick Joyce

DOROTHY THOMPSON
The Chartists
399pp. Temple Smith. £19.50.
08517 2296
GARETH STEDMAN JONES
Languages of Class: Studies in English working class history 1832-1982
260pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50 (paperback, £6.95).
0521 25488

The persistent theme of class in British history informs both these books, whose vantage-points, though both on the Left, are markedly different. Dorothy Thompson writes from a position in which class is a part of our common experience. What is stimulating about Gareth Stedman Jones's work is its interrogation of this realm of "experience" in terms of how it is actually constituted in language. If class is the British, or perhaps more the English obsession, then despite appearances to the contrary we know relatively little of the historical forms it has taken. Fantasies of class, inordinately powerful in themselves, have obscured realities, and in training his New Left weaponry on the question, Stedman Jones gets us nearer to the historical forms of class than Thompson does, though there are difficulties as well as advances to be registered.

These difficulties centre in particular upon the treatment of Chartism, which was by far the most impressive mass political movement of early nineteenth-century Europe. "Rethinking Chartism" is the longest and most recent of the essays in *Languages of Class*, a collection of pieces published in journals over the past decade which show Stedman Jones's protracted engagement with the question of the relationship of social change and politics. His meditation on the meaning of the "social" can indeed be read with profit as a chapter in the history of social history since it left its old moorings in economic history and sought to make a necessary but difficult landfall on the political shore. The author has been a significant figure in this movement, which in his case has been closely linked to the theoretical and practical problems of present-day politics. This urgency, which makes the book of consuming interest, is represented in the close relationship of the essay on Chartism with another on the current "mess" in the Labour Party. Both essays warn of the dangers of reading off the political from the social: of deriving an understanding of politics, and political platforms themselves, from assumptions about class, in particular the assumption that we have in this country an enduring and homogeneous proletarian estate.

Mrs Thompson's book is the first modern synthesis to provide a rounded account of Chartism, and it is an impressive and very substantial achievement. It is important to establish the breadth of Chartism's support and this she does - although the movement may have been less, as she writes, "the political face of the total experience of the working people of Britain" than that of the rapidly industrializing manufacturing communities. Similarly, her understandable failure to consider the reactions of those outside the working population must tell against her claim that the study of Chartism is close to being the study of British society in those years. Thompson's sure scholarship, too often declines into long tracts of description, especially in a central section called "Who were the Chartists?", and she tends to bypass the large body of work on the early and mid-nineteenth-century working class.

The principal failing of *The Chartists* is that although it shows the strength of class feeling in the movement it does not explore it in any systematic way. A very brief chapter on the manufacturing communities shows how the threat of early industrial capitalism to the family, to the community, and to traditional conceptions of work and labour gave Chartism a pivotal role in the defence of a powerfully rooted popular culture. This can be seen in the religious and "self-help" aspects of Chartism, for example, and the use it made of customary modes of communal organization. But Thompson does not explore the meanings of this social vision, nor its links to political ideology and traditions. The relationship between

old and new representations of the social order is unclear, especially old and new versions of class as turning on the opposition between the people and the ruling class, labour and capital, rich and poor. These different representations cannot be subsumed in a single, undifferentiated working-class consciousness.

What Stedman Jones shows is that despite the social and economic springs of popular mobilization, Chartism was in line with earlier radical critiques in explaining exploitation in political, not economic terms. It was not, therefore, an economically based, proto-socialist critique of capitalism, which saw production as the central arena of struggle and exploitation. By a careful analysis of the main organizing tenets of Chartism, Stedman Jones shows that the language of class was a political one. Nor, looking beyond Chartism, to the other popular movements of the time, does he find any advance there on the Chartist critique, which related more to the mercantile than the industrial phase of capitalism. This interpretation makes a good deal of sense of the Chartist years and of subsequent developments, and Stedman Jones's insistence that language is an active constituent of social reality, not the mere shell of economic discontent, marks a considerable advance in understanding.

Stedman Jones discusses the public, political language of Chartism, but we need to know also how this was appropriated and worked over in different social contexts and locations. It is a fair bet that political interpretations of class were dominant. But how were they consumed and altered locally or by extra-political movements within Chartism such as those for factory reform and trade unionism?

If Thompson's book does not readily help us to answer these questions, it suggests that the social vision of Chartism contained elements from popular culture which not only powerfully infected the meanings given to Chartism by the Chartists themselves, but also stood for ways of seeing society that have been of enduring significance in British history. Foremost among the several political-cum-social languages of class have been those which stress the value of labour and assert the integrity of custom and local community against an advancing capitalism. Stedman Jones does not adequately trace the ways these languages of social representation were transformed between the eighteenth and the twentieth century. If it is apparent that they were often anything but radical in their social effect, and were capable of appropriation and development by groups and parties outside the working class, it is also true that they often represented a powerful assertion of independence from below. Thus, moving away from a reliance upon a common-sense notion of "experience", we need to know how these elementary languages of class were constructed out of the mesh of influences operating from above and below.

Stedman Jones's conception of language and class is rather narrow. He pursues single-mindedly a public, political language, without attending to the multiplicity of discourses actually involved, both verbal and non-verbal, public and more specialized. He ignores the multivocality of language and sees it as a closed rather than an open system. This is especially apparent in his emphasis on language as limitation, whereby the great variety of popular movements and aspirations of the time were contained by the dominant discourse of radicalism. He does not appreciate that in changed social conditions old languages can take on new meanings which are perfectly adequate to deal with existing realities. In the altered conditions of the second quarter of the nineteenth century a populist discourse took on class overtones as the "people" came increasingly to be identified with the labouring classes. This was, as it were, a permanent gain in the formation of "class", but not of course an unambiguous development, since populist and class-based representations of society co-existed, then and have done so up until the present. What is missing in his account is the sense that particular discourses can be simultaneously innovative and restricting in their effect. Also, Stedman Jones's sociological and "linguistic" interpretations of Chartism are not properly aligned, so that no wider conclusions can be drawn about the social conditions under which particular languages emerge or are super-

seded. His essay is in many ways a pioneering one, but the difficult task of understanding the interaction of the several languages of class has yet to be undertaken.

Despite the book's title little systematic attention is paid to language in the other essays, except in one on late nineteenth-century London, where the music-hall is interpreted as symbolizing a new working-class culture of consolation, at once deeply introspective and conservative. It is good to find this emphasis on the constant re-making of class, with its marked conservative effect in British history, but to transfer such an image of late nineteenth-century London to the whole working class is a travesty (indeed, a travesty of London as well), echoing too closely the *New Left Review* picture of a working class hopelessly immured in the status quo and congenitally unable to assert its hegemony in Britain.

Hints of industrialization

D. C. Coleman

MAXINE BERG, PAT HUDSON and MICHAEL SONENSCHER (Editors)
Manufacture in Town and Country before the Factory
213pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50.
0521 248205

The historical advent of the industrialized society has kept economic and social historians busy ever since they appeared on the academic scene. For many, indeed, it has become something of an obsession to pursue the causes of the Industrial Revolution even though that term is only a metaphor. Over the past decade or so some hunters after elusive truth, turning their attention to the nature of manufacture before the power-driven factory, have formulated a theory of "proto-industrialization". Scholars in the US and Germany have been the chief sources of this concept, which has appeared in both neo-classical and neo-Marxist economic garb. In essence the theory states that a region in which, during the pre-factory era, there has been rural manufacture intermeshed with agriculture and producing for external markets, will, as a consequence of certain social and demographic interactions, move on from this "proto-industrialized" stage to the next stage of full industrialization. If it does not the region is said to experience "de-industrialization". The argument has stimulated learned discussion and provided pretexts for learned conferences. The book under review arose from one of the latter, held at Balliol College, Oxford, in September 1980.

Its core consists of five essays on aspects of manufacturing industry, primarily textiles, in different parts of Europe within the approximate period 1600-1850. J. K. Thompson shows how the two main locations of the woollen industry of Languedoc - a poorer, inland, upland area and a richer, lower, coastal zone - had corresponding variations in type of cloth, form of organization, and historical fate. He concludes that the proto-industrialization model is really only applicable to the more backward inland area. Jürgen Schlumbohm, in an elegant piece of statistical analysis, examines the seasonality of linen output in Osnabrück and Bielefeld and of woollen production in the Niederlausitz, c. 1770-1850. He demonstrates that seasonal fluctuations were determined by the "social and economic structure of production". Pat Hudson, expressing her disapproval of "much current theorising" which presents proto-industrialization as a stage in a linear progression, proceeds to sketch the differing forms and products of the woollen industry of the West Riding of Yorkshire c. 1760-1840. Like Dr Thompson, she relates forms of organization to agrarian settings and shows how these variations led to different types of transition to centralized production. In his essay on eighteenth-century Parisian artisans, Michael Sonenscher investigates the range of customs, rights, advances, sub-contracts and sundry rewards in kind all of which render hazardous the use of wage and price statistics, and concludes that there was "no natural market for labour in eighteenth-century Paris". And in the last essay, of the book John Styles examines the opportunities for

embezzlement open to workers in eighteenth-century English textile manufacture (that could lead to a 20 per cent supplement to wages). He looks at the nature and operation of the law, and casts some sensible doubt on the notion that legislative changes therein resented "a long-term intensification of 'capitalist' discipline".

These research essays are preceded by a survey by Maxine Berg of what British political economy writers had to say about manufacture before the factory; and by an introduction under the names of all three editors. In her essay Dr Berg looks at some of the views of inter alia, Martin, Defoe, Tucker, Smith and Dugald Stewart. She notes that they were not so much concerned with the specifically rural nature of industry, and concludes that at the beginning and the end of the eighteenth century "the wonderful skill and ingenuity" of artisans was seen as all-important rather than the existence of rural by-employment. The editors' joint essay outlines and criticizes the proto-industrialization theory and introduces the themes which the essays in the book illustrate. The emphasis is on social rather than economic history and there is a deliberate distancing from what is seen as the orthodox "machine-and-the-market" view of the coming of industrialization.

This is a rather disparate collection of essays and the reader has to take a firm grip on the themes which give such unity as there is. The criticism of the concept of proto-industrialization, mainly directed at its neo-classical version, provides one such theme. Like other red herrings of historiography, overblown notions of this sort stimulate the research and controversy which keep complacent orthodoxy on its toes even though the price is energy spent on rebuttal. The other themes - the relationship between forms of industry and forms of agriculture; and the complex network of laws, customs, rights and attitudes which enmeshed and diversified pre-industrial economic life - offer scope for the playing of innumerable variations in social history. They are not easy to play and some of those offered here do not avoid a certain fuzziness; few have the sharp edges and clarity of the two best essays, by Schlumbohm and Styles. A favourite verb of some contributors seems to be "mediated": "needs and definitions of subsistence [were] mediated through the market-place"; variations in agrarian environment were "mediated by institutional development"; the relationship between work and wages was "mediated by a variety of non-monetary customs". We seem here to be hovering perilously close to a relativism which has everything so dependent on everything else that nothing can be clearly distinguished.

There is work to be done in the area which this book explores and it offers some valuable signposts. At over £1 per ten pages, however, they may unfortunately not guide as many as they should. One final plea: will those who write in English on these topics please try not to use German terms, eg, *Verkaufsystem* and *Verlagssystem*. Apart from being mildly pretentious, such usage throws up the absurdity of English plurals on German words (*Verkaufsystemen*), seduces the unwary into spelling mistakes, conveys a false notion of clearly definable order, and in any event is pointless because adequate terms exist in English.

More faculties than one

Philip Johnson-Laird

HOWARD GARDNER
Frames of Mind: The theory of multiple intelligences
438pp. Heinemann. £18.
0434 282456

When I was at school, I formed the theory that everyone was good at something. It ran up against some apparent counter-examples, but I was always able to save it. One boy had just one exemplary trait: he was a superb liar and could always persuade teachers that it was not he who had been misbehaving. Another had the single and singular talent that he could sing "In a Monastery Garden" so appallingly that he would reduce the rest of us to tears of laughter: his badness was good. Of course this paradox should have alerted me to the vacuity of my hypothesis. No possible evidence could have refuted it. There were, however, no Popperians amongst my peers and I happily persisted in my sentimental folly.

In reading *Frames of Mind*, I was reminded of my theory since the book presents a long but highly readable defence of a similar thesis about the nature of intelligence, or, as the author would have it, multiple intelligences.

Intelligence, it used to be said, is what intelligence tests measure. In a Utopia, however, there would be no tests of intelligence. There would be no point in predicting intellectual performance and no reason for rationing educational resources on the basis of ability. Intelligence tests would be recognized as socially and intellectually divisive. In our society, they divided several generations of children into separate schools; and they have also divided several generations of scholars into separate schools of thought. Of all the controversies about intelligence, the most familiar concerns the extent to which it, or at least a measure of it, depends on innate as opposed to acquired characteristics. It was this issue that led the late Sir Cyril Burt to cook the books in favour of innate characteristics. Gardner alludes to the controversy, though happily he refrains from another exegesis of it. His concern is a different, though equally prolonged, controversy about what underlies the correlations between one sort of intelligence test and another. His goal is not so much to resolve the controversy, as to use it to lay the foundations of a new theory of intelligence.

His starting-point is a common enough scene, especially in America. A young girl is given an intelligence test. She is asked questions that assess her general knowledge, her vocabulary, and her skill with words; she is given tests of her ability to reason, her mathematical aptitude, and her skill in manipulating abstract symbols; she has to solve a maze, arrange a series of pictures so that they tell a story, and find the principles that underlie a set of abstract diagrams. Her performance on these various tasks will ultimately be reduced to a single number, her IQ (Intelligence Quotient), which is a percentage expressing the ratio of her mental age to her actual chronological age. An IQ of greater than 100 implies that she is above average; and an IQ of less than 100 implies that she is below average.

What does the number really mean? The British psychologist, Charles Spearman, argued in the 1920s that it reflects the existence of one general factor underlying the pattern of correlations among the various sorts of test. He called this factor "g", for general intelligence. Later, the American psychologist, L. L. Thurstone, argued instead that there were separate and independent mental faculties - verbal, numerical, spatial, etc - that gave rise to the patterns of correlation. The truth is that the answer one obtains depends, as Gardner rightly points out, on how the test scores are analysed statistically, and there are no objective criteria to determine which method of analysis is correct.

One response to this impasse is to abandon intelligence tests altogether, and to seek an alternative account of intelligence. As Piaget realized long ago, the really interesting psychological questions are about why children go wrong on particular test items. Cognitive psychologists have indeed set about trying to unravel the mental processes that underlie the various mental skills, and they have had some success in formulating explanatory theories of

memory, perception, and thought. But their work is only just beginning to be applied in educational practice. Gardner's long-term goal is accordingly to devise more effective ways of assessing intellectual ability as a precursor to better methods of education. Since the interpretative impasse cannot be resolved on statistical grounds, he sets out to establish the hypothesis of multiple intelligences in a different way.

The major section of his book is an extended review of the evidence in favour of distinct forms of intelligence. The list of intelligences is tentative, but Gardner makes a plausible case for the existence of half-a-dozen or so core intelligences: linguistic, musical, logical-



Gerhard Marcks woodcut "The Owl", reproduced from Bauhaus by Frank Whitford (216pp. Thames and Hudson. £3.95, 0 500 20193 5).

Participate, or else

Geoffrey Sampson

MICHAEL P. SMITH
The Libertarians and Education
161pp. Allen and Unwin. £12 (paperback, £4.95).
004 370139 6
PATRICIA WHITE
Beyond Domination: An essay in the political philosophy of education
183pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £11.95.
07100 9765 4

The idea that ordinary schools distort children's development and make society illiberal and conformist became a 1970s cliché, and in the 1980s theory has been turning into practice: a year or so ago *The Times* quoted local-government education officials as recognizing, ruefully, that education at home was an idea whose time has come. The (mainly American) theorists of "deschooling" (tended to present their views as entirely novel). In reality they were restating ideas developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, often by the leading figures of political anarchism - many of whom actually ran "free schools" rather than just talking about them. Like anarchism, the libertarian education movement had its roots mainly in France, Spain and Russia.

Michael P. Smith sets out to rescue turn-of-the-century educational libertarianism from oblivion, locating recent deschoolers within the framework of alternative approaches established by their European predecessors. He distinguishes the idea that teaching itself should be non-coercive from the use of education to promote social freedom. Often these went hand in hand, but A.S. Neill, and Tolstoy, for instance, cared mainly about the former issue, while Francisco Ferrer (a Spaniard executed as an anarchist in 1909, whose educational experiments were immensely influential in his day) was more concerned with the latter.

There is a tension between these aims. Advocates of non-coercive pedagogy often urge that schooling should avoid bookishness and bring children into contact with practical realities which stimulate their curiosity naturally. Libertarians looked to the natural sciences as rational disciplines dealing with experimental facts, and thus a suitable alternative to scholastic rigidity. Yet science-based

mathematical, visuo-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, and various sorts of personal intelligence mediating social interactions. The form of this argument is similar in each case. He looks for a number of tell-tale signs suggesting that the putative faculty is independent of other mental abilities. Some signs are biological, eg, the faculty has a plausible evolutionary origin. Some signs are neurological, eg, the faculty can be destroyed, or spared in isolation, as a result of brain damage. Some are psychological, eg, it has an identifiable core of "information-processing" mechanisms, and there is a standard sequence of stages in its development within an individual. Some are biographical, eg, it is exhibited to an exceptional degree in certain individuals, and it may even be the single talent of an *idiot savant*.

Consider, for instance, Gardner's case for a musical faculty. Its independence of other abilities is suggested by the precocious musical development of such composers as Mozart and Mendelssohn, and such performers as Rubinstein and Menuhin. There have even been *idiot savants* of unusual musical ability, including one child who specialized in performing "Happy Birthday" in the style of any classical composer. The general development of musical competence has been charted by psychologists, and it follows - at least in Western children - a predictable course. The mechanisms underlying the perception of music have been shown to differ from those underlying the perception of speech. Brain damage following a stroke or accident can lead to the loss of musical ability, yet leave speech untouched; conversely, lesions can produce aphasia while sparing musical competence. This so-called "double dissociation" strongly suggests that music and language depend on

faculties that are largely independent of one another.

Gardner has amassed many intriguing anecdotes and case histories to support his argument for each of the multiple intelligences. In the last section of the book, he offers a plausible analysis of types of schooling and their effects - from modern conventional schools to the innovative Suzuki method of teaching children the violin - and some equally sensible programmatic remarks about the assessment of intellectual abilities. The only puzzle is whether or not the theory of multiple intelligences is correct. There is no reason to doubt that certain regions of the brain specialize in certain tasks, and that these tasks are of evolutionary significance. What is debatable, as Gardner admits, is whether the performance of these tasks depends solely on an independent mental faculty. The theory of multiple intelligences is most easily tested in its strongest form, according to which each task depends on one and only one underlying faculty. This thesis, however, is not only refutable, it has been refuted. A weaker form of the theory is that each task depends on a major underlying mental faculty, but also on other faculties to a lesser degree. Once grant, say, that musical composition normally depends on both musical and symbolic competences, and it is a short step to the view that any exercise of intelligence depends in part on a common underlying mechanism. The weaker version of the theory is accordingly all but impossible to distinguish from the theory of general intelligence. Gardner himself identifies most of these problems, yet, not surprisingly, he does not allow that his theory may be no more refutable than the simple-minded hypothesis that everyone is good at something.

education often seems to encourage unquestioning acceptance of the social status quo; the scientific mind is impatient with the necessarily inexact, unmathematical character of social criticism. Conversely, education which aims to promote political freedom can be excessively abstract and remote from young people's experience. Sociology sometimes seems to be the Latin of the late twentieth century.

Like political anarchists, the educational libertarians (as Smith presents them) appeared poor at understanding why coercion exists. A teacher can do nothing for children unless there is some degree of order in the classroom; it may be possible to achieve this non-coercively, but by far the easiest strategy for the average adult is an assertion of authority - we cannot expect the spread of libertarian ideals to turn thousands of schoolteachers into charismatic saints. Libertarians often implied that it is teachers who force pupils into a passive role, making them submit to a teacher-designed curriculum rather than taking their own initiatives to learn and exploiting teachers as resources. Anyone who teaches undergraduates knows that, often, the opposite is true: students will sometimes apply considerable psychological pressure in order to convert open-ended dialogues into occasions where the teacher announces Truth and students silently take notes. (A teacher can try to resist this pressure, and sometimes he succeeds - but such resistance is itself a kind of coercion.)

Furthermore, the doctrine that people will learn what is useful and interesting voluntarily seems to overlook the many cases where highly fulfilling intellectual attainments depend on a foundation which few people would choose to learn for its own sake (multiplication tables, Greek paradigms). Children are good at rote learning, and they have plenty of time to devote to intellectual investment, but they cannot judge the eventual pay-off. Arguably, we are as justified in forcing children to learn boring things as we are in preventing them taking addictive drugs; in both cases adults alone can know the long-term implications. Smith does us a service by assembling the views of the educational libertarians, but he does not convince me that they thought such questions through.

Patricia White is concerned more with education for autonomous citizenship than with the nature of the teaching process. Half of *Beyond Domination* defines the ideal society whose education system she maps out in the

rest. In her utopia, virtually all resources will be communally owned and administered by participatory democracy: freedom will be assured by the fact that any citizen involved with an institution has the right - indeed, the duty - to make his voice heard in decisions concerning it. White recognizes that exceptions must be allowed to the general obligation to participate. To a writer on ethical philosophy, "even the slightest involvement... will appear as a monstrous encroachment". But those of us not lucky enough to be in reserved occupations must buckle down to our democratic duties, and White assures us that we will find the committee work involved in running, say, the local sports centre quite modest. (I don't know whether Ms White has ever helped to run a local sports centre. I have: I think she might be surprised how much time is involved.)

Participatory democracy, apparently, has remarkable effects on human motivation. If state policy happens to favour her own way of life over others, White explains, then on democratic assumptions "it would be irrational of me, not to oppose this"; "in a democracy those participating at the various levels would not be voting 'selfishly' but in the public interest". In schools, while pupils and cleaning-ladies will help decide time-tables, there must naturally be limits to local democratic control; the syllabus itself will be nationally uniform: so as to ensure that all children receive their constitutional entitlement to an education centred on political philosophy. Science or music teachers who find it hard to work politics into their lessons will be helped at staff meetings where their tentative suggestions can be co-ordinated into an overall policy of "political education across the curriculum". Recalcitrant parents will be encouraged to take advantage of state training in child-rearing duties by what White calls "persuasive tactics" (they will be compelled to attend the courses by law, and their children will be taken away if the parents fail to learn the state's lessons). These things will be done in order to liberate individuals from "domination".

Patricia White is the Head of the Department of Philosophy of Education at the University of London Institute of Education. Readers who wonder why the distinguished series-editor chose to publish her book will learn nothing from his preface: through some extraordinary mix-up this deals with a different book, by a man called Wringe.

The last of the few

Vernon Reynolds

DIAN FOSSEY
Gorillas in the Mist
 320pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £10.95.
 0340 287349

The book is well titled. Gorillas are in the mist. In the mist of time: alive today, they are a continuation of the anthropoid line that gave rise to ourselves; in the mist of survival: there are 242 mountain gorillas alive today, 50 per cent fewer than when the last census was taken 22 years ago; and literally in the mist: they live in the cold, rainy Hagenia zone of the Virunga Volcanoes in Africa, where the great humidity, coupled with solar warmth by day, leads to the kind of environment that befits this most splendid and elusive of creatures.

Dian Fossey is the gorillas' Jane Goodall. She gave up her 9-to-5 job in New York, first to visit Africa, and later to return and dedicate herself to the study of these last remaining mountain gorillas. Like Goodall, she was inspired by Louis Leakey to dedicate herself to the project. Her book is now out, but the work goes on: on a recent visit to England she stated that all she wanted was to get back to the gorillas, which, presumably, is where she is now.

The study started at Kabara, where George Schaller had studied before her. This site had to be abandoned, and she returned later to find it overrun by cattle herders. These, together with poachers, are the chief threats to the gorillas' survival. Finally, Kariakoo was selected as the study site and there Fossey has remained, getting to know the animals individually and to follow them from birth to maturity and, in some cases, death.

Individuals are recognizable by their nose-prints, relatives having nose-prints that resemble each other. They are also recognizable by size, from the tiny infants to the enormous silver-backed males, and by their personalities. And just as Fossey recognizes them, they have come to recognize her, and to lose their fear. Some ignore her, others share their lives with her, gazing into her camera lens, making off with bits of equipment, touching her, or looking intently into her eyes with what she experiences as a gentle understanding, for which she is deeply grateful.

Contrast their extreme fear of others. Poachers put down snares primarily to catch antelope, and gorillas sometimes get caught in them. They are not always able to remove them, and die as their wounds become infected. Fossey removes the snares, but the area is vast and more appear all the time. Effective poaching of the Parc National des Volcans is impossible given the present-day attitudes of the local people, who resent being deprived of the land they need for cattle and cultivation, and even the attitudes of the park administrators, who in some cases have been prepared to barter a baby gorilla for a new Land Rover.

As a result of pressure from a German zoo, Fossey was obliged to send one infant, whose departure she had intercepted, to captivity, for if she had kept it another would certainly have been caught, with all that that entails. Capturing a baby gorilla involves killing the big male silverback of the group, who charges the human hunters again and again in defence of his child. Mothers are slaughtered too. The process has gone on all through the present century: I reported the facts in my book *The Apes* in 1967, and others had done so before me.

But worse, some large male gorillas are killed for trophies. This happened to Dian's beloved friend Digit, in whose name a conservation fund was set up. But what, given the doleful history of the mountain gorillas, does the word "conservation" mean? If we cannot save this, the most important species of all, (and it seems we cannot), then what can we hope to save? Conservation of species like the ne-ne goose of Hawaii is relatively uncomplicated: near extinction, it was brought to England by Peter Scott and bred back to a healthy population size, then reintroduced to its native islands. This goes for larger animals too, such as Père David's deer.

But gorillas cannot be caught without such bloodshed that Fossey stands firm against this approach to their conservation. Even if gorillas are caught, 2008 have a poor breeding record.

and no gorilla has ever been reintroduced to the wild (though the other great apes, chimpanzees and orang-utans, have). So the only answer, according to Fossey, is policing, park patrols, and heavy terms of imprisonment for convicted poachers. The latter has happened, thanks to a diligent park conservator, but other officials have been less straightforward.

Gorillas in the Mist also contains much information about gorilla life. First, we are forced to alter our conception of the big males as gentle giants. Most of the time they are gentle, they lead their females and young through the dense vegetation, peacefully feeding as they go. But when two groups meet there can be very real fighting, and an adult male will often try to obtain a female from another male's group, especially if he has none of his own. He has to fight, and older males bear the scars on their heads and shoulders of the fights they have had. An indication of the severity of their biting comes from the discovery by Fossey and her helpers of two male gorilla skulls, one with a broken-off canine tooth still implanted in it, the other with a hole in it caused by such a tooth. Such devastating bites to the head are quite literally murderous.

All-American birdman

Bruce Campbell

CLARK HUNTER
The Life and Letters of Alexander Wilson
 456pp. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society (available in the UK from Wheldon and Wesley). \$40.
 087169 154 X

The greatest American bird artist is usually thought to be John James Audubon, after whom the most powerful transatlantic conservation society is named and whose elephant folio *Birds of America*, with engravings by Robert Havell, is now fabulously valuable. Audubon's fame transcends that of his contemporary Alexander Wilson, but as a serious ornithologist Wilson has a good claim to be considered his superior. As an artist, however, he lacks Audubon's French panache.

He has over the years attracted quite an extensive literature. This large new book is the work of another "native Scotsman", who admits for a start that he is "barely able to distinguish between a sparrow and a robin". His defence is that Wilson was much more than an ornithologist: a weaver by training, a poet by inclination, a political reformer by conviction, whose activities led to his somewhat hasty departure from Scotland when he was twenty-eight.

Wet and wonderful

Tim Halliday

GERALD THOMPSON, JENNIFER COLDREY
 and GEORGE BERNARD
The Pond
 256pp. with 416 colour photographs. Collins. £12.95.
 000219 145 8

Oxford Scientific Films have established a richly deserved reputation for their ability to capture the unusual, the beautiful and the rare in meticulous detail on film. The application of their remarkable skills to still photographs is demonstrated in this sumptuous book. Tiny mosquito larvae, water fleas and flatworms are displayed in the same sparkling clarity as the much larger fish, newts and toads, and we are taken into a world full of bizarre and menacing monsters. Particularly exciting are the spreads of sequential photographs showing, for example, the emergence of a fully-winged dragonfly from the armoured confines of its nymphal skin. Considerable space is devoted to the plants that grow in, and around the edge of ponds. This is particularly welcome, too often the crucial role of plants in sustaining the animal life of ponds is ignored.

This is not simply another pretty picture book. The extensive and authoritative text is

Another dent in the image of the gentle gorillas is the fact, also reported for chimpanzees and a number of other species, that when a male succeeds in obtaining a new female who has an infant, or in taking over a group of females and infants, he systematically bites the infants to death. By such infanticide he ensures that future progeny, in whose survival he will invest many years of time and energy, are his own.

But such apparently genetic compulsions should not blind us to the fact that gorillas have great sensitivity and a good deal of subtlety in their interactions. The former is shown, for instance, by a male called Beethoven who slowed the pace of his group for the sake of an old, sick female; she was not left behind. And there are other examples of care for the aged. Genetically, this seems disadvantageous or at least not advantageous; why then did it happen? We should perhaps not be too reluctant to accept the existence of a feeling of sympathy in gorillas, however scientific we may like to think we are.

Inbreeding occurs in wild gorilla groups: Beethoven bred with his daughter Fantasy to produce Banjo. Brothers and sisters will mate,

but never, it seems, sons and their mothers. This again is curious, for genetically it is different from father-daughter mating, but more severely frowned on than father-son incest. Why? Is it because a mother-offspring relationship is more biologically taint than that of a father? If so, it shows evolution can produce complex behavioural terms that are very finely tuned to genetic programming.

Towards the book's end we are brought to conservation, conservation of the pond and of the mountain eco-system, threats (as in other areas such as the Himalayas) human encroachment that will ultimately destroy the whole climatic structure. I was in Virungas in 1962, and observed the gorillas on the slopes of one of the volcanoes, Mt. Nivura. Even then, they were under threat, now they are almost gone. And, a hundred years after they have vanished, the whole mountain system where they lived is denuded, the land-hungry people will be forced to leave, and the barren mountainside so lush today, will bear silent testimony to man's relentless destruction of his planet.

Four of his colour plates are also reproduced.

In Scotland Wilson was a roving, unpeppery young man, a minor poet in the shadow of Burns. Once across the Atlantic he showed his mettle as a successful schoolteacher, and then received inspiration from William Bartram the botanist and devoted himself to the collection of "all our finest birds", and the description in the nine-volume *American Ornithology* which drove him to an early grave (two of the nine were published posthumously). To accomplish this task he undertook travels reminiscent in their rigour of the Lewis and Clark Expedition (he was a friend of Meriwether Lewis, as of President Jefferson and immortalized them in his long letters to family and friends).

A text overburdened with footnotes is tedious, but in a book of this kind some signs are desirable. There are constant references to new species which fell to Wilson's gun but which are not identified for us. The editor's initial admission about sparrows and robins is illuminating: does he realize that the American "sparrows" (except for the introduced house sparrow) are the same family as European buntings and that the American robin is the equivalent of our blackbird? No doubt he does, but some reassurance would have been welcome.

full of information about the plants, animals and microorganisms that inhabit ponds that it can be treated as a text book on pond life that also illustrates many of the basic principles of ecology. The book is ideal for use in the classroom and the home, in conjunction with a large aquarium in which many of the animals and events so vividly illustrated and described can be observed directly.

It is something of a surprise to find pictures of a moose, a beaver and a racoon alongside those of more familiar indigenous pond dwellers. This, clearly, is part of an attempt to widen the appeal of the book to attract an international audience, but it is only partially successful. While it is true that many of the smaller animals can be found in other parts of the world, or have very similar counterparts, the book fails to do justice to the much greater variety of vertebrate life, particularly of fish, amphibians and reptiles, to be found in ponds outside Britain. As a relatively small island in biogeographical terms, Britain has an impoverished vertebrate fauna. The inclusion of a token European treefrog does little to give an impression of life in those ponds in America or Australia where over a dozen species of treefrog can be found breeding at the same time.

The pond, though much loved by small children, primary school teachers and naturalists, is a fast disappearing feature of our countryside and wildlife.

Sale of manuscripts and documents

Sarah Bradford

Christie's, King Street, sale on March 28 included an important collection of letters and manuscripts of the *ancien régime* in France, notably some poignant documents by Louis XVI. "Réflexions sur mes entretiens avec Mr. le Duc de Vaugouin", an autobiographical book of precepts written by the young Louis XVI, consisted of ninety-nine pages of paragraphs under such headings as "Sur mes défauts" and "Caractère de la fermeté". This touching relic of youthful good intentions survived the imprisonment and execution of the King, passing to his daughter, the duchesse d'Angoulême, for whom it was bound by Serre on her return to Paris in 1814. It was bought by Rogers for £23,760. The problems facing Louis's maturity were apparent in a letter written by him reporting a conversation with Necke about the severe financial difficulties facing the monarchy (£5,400, again to Rogers). A key moment in the events leading to the tragic dénouement of Louis XVI's reign was represented by the King's own autograph draft of the speech which he delivered to the États-Généraux on June 23, 1789. This was apparently the final draft; an earlier one is recorded as having been sold to the André de Coppet collection at Sotheby's in 1958 for the then high price of £2,100. The present manuscript had made its appearance the previous year in the Lucien-Graux sale in Paris; this time it was sold to Thompson for £45,360.

The following lot, a document signed by the Minister of Justice on December 25, 1792, acknowledges the receipt of the decree ordering "Louis Capet" to be brought before "la barre de la Convention" at nine o'clock the following morning for the trial which was to result in Louis's execution on January 21, 1793 (£1,296 to Bruce).

Other important items from the same collection included an autograph letter dated September 1, 1578, from Henrique II of Portugal to his eventual successor, Philip II of Spain, announcing the death of the previous king, Henrique's headstrong, inbred nephew, Sebastião, in battle in Morocco, an event which was to lead, upon the death of Henrique two years later, to the loss of Portuguese independence to Spain (£864 to Benveniste). A letter signed, with autograph subscription, by Mary, Queen of Scots, to the Marquis de Rambouillet refers to yet another fruitless attempt by Henri III to secure his sister-in-law's release. Writing from "Châtisworth" on August 31, 1578, Mary complains to Rambouillet of her enemies' misrepresentations of her to Elizabeth.

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AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

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 Sarah Bradford's *Princess Grace* was published last month.
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 John Buxton's *Elizabethan Taste* was reprinted last year.
 Bruce Campbell is the author of *The Oxford Book of Birds*, 1964.
 D. C. Coleman is Emeritus Professor of Economic History at the University of Cambridge.
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 D. J. E. Knight's collection of essays, *A Mania for Sentences*, was published last year.
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 Harold Hobson is an Honorary Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford.
 R. V. Holdsworth's edition of Ben Jonson's *Epitaphs* was published in 1979.
 P. D. James's crime novels include *The Skull Beneath the Skin*, 1982.
 Marlon Johnson is Honorary Research Fellow at the Centre of West African Studies, University of Birmingham.
 P. N. Johnson-Laird's *Mental Models* was published last year.
 Patrick Joyce is the author of *Work, Society and Politics: The culture of the factory in later Victorian England*, 1982.
 Annette Lavers is the author of *Roland Barthes, Structuralism and after*, 1982.
 Hermione Lee is a lecturer in English at the University of York.
 Ghallo Lepachy is the author of *A Survey of Structural Linguistics*, 1982.
 Martin Lynn is a lecturer in Modern History at Queen's University, Belfast.
 Caroline Moorehead's biography of Lord Bernstein was published earlier this year.
 Jill Neville's novel, *Last Ferry to Manly*, will appear later this year.
 Richard Osborne is a regular contributor to *Gramophone*.
 John Ray is Herbert Thompson Reader in Egyptology at the University of Cambridge.
 Vernon Reynolds is the author of *The Biology of Human Aesthetics*, 1980.
 Pat Rogers's books include *Henry Fielding: A biography*, 1979.
 Geoffrey Sampson's *Schools of Linguistics* was published in 1980.
 Anne Scott-James's most recent book is *The Cottage Garden*, 1981.
 Julian Symon's crime novel, *The Name of Anabel Lee*, was published last year.
 Nicholas Temperley's *The Music of the English Parish Church* was published in 1981.
 Malcolm Yapp is the author of *Strategies of British India: from 1798 to 1850*, 1980.

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